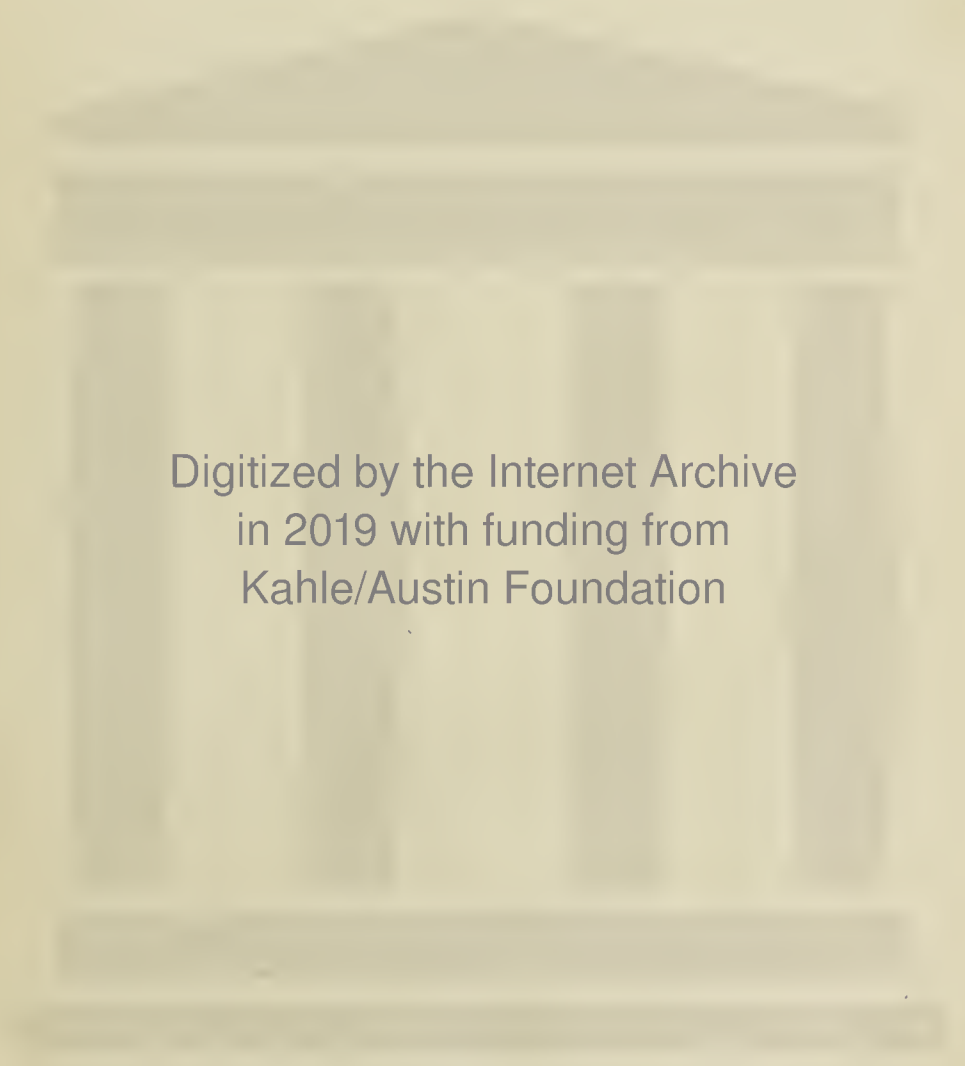




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THE LETTERS  
OF  
RICHARD HENRY LEE

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY  
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VOLUME II

1779-1794

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TO  
MY WIFE

164527



## PREFATORY NOTE

THE number of important letters of Richard Henry Lee that could be collected from scattered and widely separated sources, such as are noted in the preface to the first volume of this edition, has exceeded the editor's expectation. More than 540 letters of Lee's authorship have been printed in these two volumes, the present volume containing over 290 letters written during the last fifteen years of his life, 1779-1794.

Besides Lee's active service as Member of Congress, Virginia Assemblyman, President of Congress, and first United States Senator from Virginia during this period so important in American political and constitutional development, he maintained a correspondence still more extensive apparently than before. He added some threescore persons, many of whom were conspicuous in home and foreign affairs, to the ten or more prominent public men he had retained from among the correspondents of the earlier time.

The letters disclose the inner workings of Congress and abundantly show Lee's continued devotion to the cause of independence and to the union of the states under the Confederation, for both of which he had moved in Congress in 1776. Even while in the Virginia Assembly he kept national ends in mind, and like Jefferson had a vision of the West. He pressed his state for a cession of her claims to the lands beyond the Ohio that Maryland might accede to the Union, and that there might be a national domain from which new states could be created.

## PREFATORY NOTE

Lee gives very different reasons from those sometimes assigned for his declining the proffered honor of representing his state in the Federal Convention. Suggestions also to its delegates, such as, "that the right of making paper money shall be exclusively vested in Congress," indicate his desire to aid their work. Later he expressed the belief that "a practical improvement of our federal Constitution" would come from the Convention, and of the plan it produced he wrote, "This Constitution has a great many excellent regulations in it, and if it could be reasonably amended would be a fine system."

The proposals for amendment that Lee made to Congress when it was considering the Constitution are here (pp. 442 n.-444 n.) printed for the first time from an original draft found in the interesting Shippen Collection. During the struggle for ratification he was urging adoption of the Constitution with amendments, and opposing the proposals for rejection and a new convention. He sought his appointment to the United States Senate that he might fight for his cherished "Bill of Rights" and other amendments.

Lee's interest in foreign relations was keen, and it is appropriate that the final letter of the volume should be to Washington, approving his policy of neutrality and peace.

Gratefully the editor acknowledges his obligation to those mentioned in the preface of the first volume for past and continued aid to his work. Appreciation and thanks are also expressed to Professor George Petrie, Dean of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, to Dr. Charles O. Paullin of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and to Mr. Joseph Sabin of New York for suggesting or presenting additional letters of Lee.

It is also a pleasure to say that especially is the editor indebted to Mrs. Charles E. Rieman, chairman

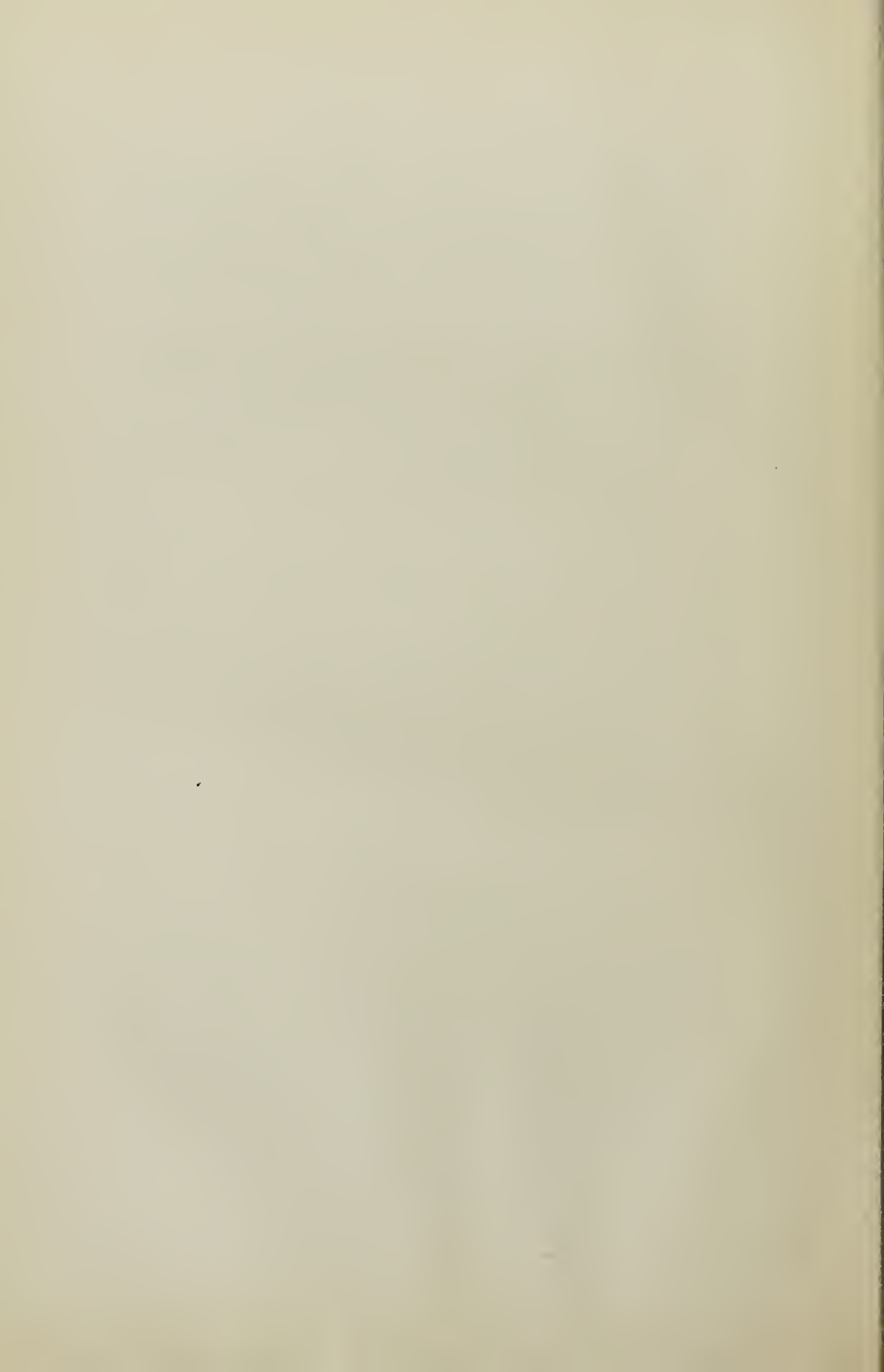
## PREFATORY NOTE

of the Publication Committee, Mrs. William Ruffin Cox, president, Mrs. Charles R. Miller, secretary, and the other officers and members of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America for providing the agency and the funds for the publication of this volume.

For description of the sources of the collection, of abbreviations, and of the general plan of the editing, the preface to Volume I. should be consulted.

J. C. B.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,  
PHILADELPHIA, March 21, 1914.





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# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY Jan. 10. 1779.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Since I wrote you by last Post, I have sustained a very severe fit of gout, brought on I imagine by the sudden change of weather lately from warm to Snow & frost. The swelling and inflammation of my foot now abates, so that I expect to be with you, as Merchants say, in all this month. At least my best endeavors shall not be wanting for this purpose. In my intervals of pain I have employed myself in looking over the numerous letters I had received since May last from our brothers, and which the pressure of public business at Congress prevented me from properly attending to. Thus whilst some, interest alone upon public duty, suffer not inferior considerations to interrupt them; others, bent on private views of emolument and advancement, are endeavoring to raise themselves on the general ruin. Careless of the latter if the former can be obtained. Besides the Gazette publication, M<sup>r</sup> Deane, it seems, had a thousand hand bills struck off, the better to dispose of his infamous Libel both against Congress and our family.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Transcripts, V. 47.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

There was a man seen passing Nomony ferry lately with one of them in his hand, and I have been well informed that great care has been taken to place them in proper hands for adding to false and wicked innuendo, additional false and wicked suggestions. I send you inclosed a letter that I lately received from our York written by a brave, sensible and honest Whig. Col. Marshall sent me the Magazine on account of the curious paragraph contained in it, (and which is sent you,) and to show the greedy swallowers of Newspaper accounts how little faith is to be put on many of them. The industry practised in circulating this scandalous libel, confirms the old opinion that wickedness is ever more industrious than virtue. The latter trusting to its own intrinsic worth, the former depending for success upon activity, art and imposition.

We sometimes have handbills published to notify some great victory obtained over the enemies of our Country, but when have we taken pains to have them penetrate every part of the U. S.?

On Eagles wings invidious scandals fly,  
Whilst virtuous actions are but born and die.

You have inclosed, copy of a letter from W. L. dated Paris July 31<sup>st</sup>, which, with Ross's letter to Deane, a copy of which you have already, and M<sup>r</sup>. Lee's letter to Congress read last Oct. or Nov. do most clearly refute that part of the Libel which suggests culpable inactivity to Commercial business, arising from apprehensions of private injury — And the letter from Ross shews that Deane knew this inactivity arose from another cause than what he has suggested. Mr. Deane knows also, that the causes of not going sooner to Vienna arose from many wise and solid reasons of most public nature and not from what he has again in this instance suggested. The political wisdom of ap-



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

plying to Vienna & Berlin was known to Congress, but the particular temper of these Courts not understood when they appointed a commissioner to go thither.

When W<sup>m</sup> Lee returned from Nantes to Paris in Oct. (for in his letter of the 7<sup>th</sup> he says, I am just returned here from Nantes) and rec<sup>d</sup> his appointment of Commissioner, the return of Dr. Lee from Berlin with a true knowledge of the then temper of that Court (see the Dr's account of his negotiations at Berlin to Congress) made it evident beyond a doubt that pressing our affairs there, would rather irritate than accelerate—The Prussian Minister having declared that they must wait until France & Spain had taken decisive steps—In the mean time M<sup>r</sup> T. Morris died, and Mr Deane himself signed a request to the Court to have the papers of Mr Morris put into M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee's hands, and was, with the other Commissioners of opinion that Mr Lee ought to return to Nantes and arrange the pub. Commercial affairs before he set out for Vienna—When Mr Lee returned a second time from Nantes, he was compelled to wait the conclusion of affairs with the Court of France, to get the necessary papers for the better execution of his business, and also the requisite sum for defraying his expenses—

The latter Mr. Deane was particularly concerned in withholding, under pretext of no orders, and yet knowing all these things he would impose on the public a belief that private motives kept Mr Lee quiet.

Mr. Deane in his Narrative verbal (notes of which many as well as myself took) informed Congress that Cunningham had orders to sail North about to America, that his people mutinied and compelled him to take prizes—Is this a reason for

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

those Vessels continuing so long to cruise on the French & Spanish Coasts, the prizes to be consigned to private hands, and the Vessels at last sold without order of Congress to private use? —

Looking over a paper sent me by Dr. Lee which is titled "Estimate d'c" I find that in order to quiet doubts about the expenditure of the public money, this paper contains on the debtor side all the large stores ordered by Congress, tho a fiftieth part was never sent, a heavy charge for the Ship built in Holland altho that Ship was taken off our hands and her cost paid by the Court, yet no credit appears. I wish we could see, and public justice demands it sh<sup>d</sup> be produced, an exact account with vouchers, of the goods really shipped for pub. use and when & where by Mr. Deane's order; the real expences incurred properly on account of the public, and then credit given for all the monies received on loan, for Prizes, and when Mr. Deane has received it, for Cargoes sent. The pretense is that he come suddenly away, and his accounts not redere — But the fact is indubitable that Mr. Lee frequently applied for a settlement, long before any account of Mr. Dean's recall, and it was as uniformly evaded, and was the true and only cause of this accumulated enmity against him.

With regard to Mr. Deane's numerous assertions, most certainly, every candid Man will demand other proof than his ipse dixit. It is curious enough to see this Libel criminating Dr. Lee for an *ostentatious display* of his commission, and M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee for cautiously concealing his. How is this Man to be pleased, if you say nothing he blames, if you say anything he censures! After all the common practise here takes place — To avoid the settlement of his own Accounts, he means to turn all attention to Objects different and of his own Creation —

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

\* \* \* <sup>1</sup> I hope Congress will be better Huntsmen than to be thus eluded —

Col. Mason left me two days ago and is gone below the ferry, he returns here three days hence. The only Taylor we have here, and he a crazy one, has assured me that my cloaths shall be ready on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Our love to M<sup>rs</sup> Lee, the Shippens, and best respects to my worthy friends in Congress.

No letters or papers from Congress these two last Posts, a third day will arrive 2 days hence —

The Post has never come in —

Sincerely Yours.

TO [THE EDITOR OF THE VIRGINIA GAZETTE]<sup>2</sup>

MR. PURDIE

[*Circ.* January 19, 1779]

SIR,

It is expected by the public that you will comply with your promise of publishing impartially the papers on both sides in Mr. Deanes controversy. If none but the collections of Mr. Deanes Tory friends and Mercantile Abettors are to appear before the public it is impossible that a fair and honest judgment can be formed. By *particular desire* you published in your Gazette of Jan<sup>y</sup> 22 a piece signed Senex, but you have never favored the the public with a complete and sensible answer to Senex published also in the Pennsylvania Packet. Perhaps you never received the latter, when you do, you will shew a candid character by publishing it, as well as all<sup>3</sup> the other pieces that have been written on this

<sup>1</sup> An unimportant sentence is here omitted.

<sup>2</sup> A. dr. L. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 275. Endorsed by Lee, "Answer to Senex."

<sup>3</sup> The word "in" is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

occasion. In the meantime, be so kind as to communicate thro your useful paper the following answer to Senex, which I pledge the reputation of an honest man to be the truth.

### 1 Question

The first question of Senex is, "Whether Mr. Arthur Lee is, or is not, Commissioner both to the Courts of Versailles and Madrid"

Answer NO.

### 2<sup>d</sup> question

Whether he was not an intimate acquaintance of D<sup>r</sup> Berkenhout Corresponded with him on subjects of a political nature during M<sup>r</sup> Lees residence at Paris, and gave him letters of Introduction to his brother the hon. R. H. Lee?

Answer

Mr. R. H. Lee has already answered the latter part of this question in the most positive manner NO — And for the former part, it is incumbent on Senex to prove that being an intimate Acquaintance with D<sup>r</sup> Berkenhout was blameable, he should prove also that D<sup>r</sup> Lee corresponded with D<sup>r</sup> Berkenhout on political subjects, and that this political correspondence contained in it anything criminal. Otherwise a just<sup>1</sup> and a candid Man, would suppose, until the contrary was proved, that D<sup>r</sup> Berkenhout was not an unworthy Acquaintance, and that, as Dr. Lee had displayed the strongest attachments to America his native Country, and had most ably supported its cause by his writings; if such a correspondence had existed that it was not only innocent but laudable. 3<sup>d</sup> question — Whether M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee is, or is not, commissioner to the Courts of Vienna and Berlin, and commercial Agent for the Congress in Europe? <sup>2</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Lees letter to his friend in Congress

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for "reasonable" erased.

<sup>2</sup> The words "No, he is not Com" are here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

date Nov<sup>r</sup> 24, 1777 from Paris will give to this question the following decisive Ans.<sup>1</sup>

Answer — “ In fact the public business in this Country has been, & is likely to continue in Strange disorder nor is it likely to mend *until the Secret Committee confine all their Mercantile business to their Mercantile Agent and keep the Commissioners to their Political duty which may be neglected from too much attention to private schemes of Commerce on public funds, and contemptible private jobs* — I am now out of the question, therefore cannot be charged with partiality in my advice — I shall from henceforth take my leave of this department, keeping my attention entirely confined to the charge which is committed to my care ”

The truth is, that M<sup>r</sup> Lee understood, as did everybody else, that his political superseded his Commercial appointment—The reason was evident—The scene of commerce was in France, that of politics far off in Germany. It is also true, that altho M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee had thus in Nov<sup>r</sup> as he expresses it, [“] *taken his leave of the Commercial department* ” yet the Commissioners at Paris, whom were directed to furnish him with copies of the treaties to propose to Vienna and Berlin, delaying to do this,<sup>2</sup> and other political obstructions intervening to stay M<sup>r</sup> Lees journey north, until the death of M<sup>r</sup> Tho<sup>s</sup> Morris, the then surviving Com<sup>l</sup> Agent in France, obliged Mr. Lee to visit Nantes before he left France to put the pub. affairs in some order for which purpose Mr. Deane as well as the other Commissioners solicited & obtained a royal order to put the papers of Mr. Morris

<sup>1</sup> The eight words preceding are substituted for “ answer this question ” erased. The letter was printed in the *Virginia Gazette* with several omissions and variations and one important addition which is noted.

<sup>2</sup> The words “ until the ” are here erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

into the hands of M<sup>r</sup> Lee—Whilst M<sup>r</sup> Lee was at Nantes he appointed Merchants of unquestioned reputation and fortune in the respective ports to do<sup>1</sup> the public business,<sup>2</sup> at each of them, until the pleasure of Congress should be known—This done, he returned to Paris, and thence to Vienna—M<sup>r</sup> Williams was not an Agent appointed by Congress or its Committee, therefore his Commission is not known here. And you Senex with M<sup>r</sup> Deane best know whether M<sup>r</sup> Dean is not concerned in trade with Mr. Williams<sup>3</sup>—That M<sup>r</sup> Lee made such con-

<sup>1</sup> The six preceding words are substituted for “to do, what little business was to be” which Lee erased.

<sup>2</sup> The words “at the respective” are here erased.

<sup>3</sup> The text printed in the *Virginia Gazette* has instead of the preceding sentence the following: “Mr. Deane appointed Mr. Williams, praises him, and has put large sums of public money into the hands of this young man, I understand about a million of livres. In a letter from Mr. Williams to Mr. Deane, dated Nantes, March 26, 1778 (a copy of which I have seen) Mr. Williams says, ‘*My connection with you being known.*’ Will you, Senex, or your friend Mr. S. Deane explain what this *connection* means? Or it may be supposed, considering your friend’s turn for commerce, to be a commercial connection. In the same letter to Mr. Deane, Mr. Williams writes, “I received your favor of the 21st. instant, and observe that *my draughts will continue to be accepted.* It would be less troublesome to you, and *most beneficial to my credit, if you would give Mr. Grand a general approbation*; for [if] every draught is to lie unaccepted till Mr. G. can have an opportunity of presenting them to you, the holder will not have a very good opinion of my solidity, and Mr. G., I suppose, will not in future *accept till after the bills are presented*, for he has written I suppose a dozen times to me desiring your approbation of what has already been drawn *over the established credit.*” I am unacquainted with Mr. Williams, but I am told he is a young man. Whether young or old, it does not seem modest in him to desire leave to draw on the public treasure at will, and that his draughts shall be accepted, without presentation, by the banker with whom was deposited all the money of the United States in France. As you are fond of questions, Senex, let me ask you, and you may inquire of your friend, Mr. Deane, what share he had in the large cargo of cloths imported into

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

tracts with the Agents as M<sup>r</sup> Deane mentions no candid Man will believe until Mr. Deane produces proofs because he professes that he is writing against Men whom he calls his enemies — If friendship for the public is enmity to M<sup>r</sup> Dean these gentlemen are not to blame for it — They contend for the settlement of the public accounts that it may be clearly seen how the public treasure has been expended.

The next question concerning A.<sup>1</sup>—

4<sup>th</sup> Question — Whether this Gentleman did not, since his appointment to Offices of public trust under the United States, hold his Office of Alderman in the City of London, and whether he does not still hold that Office.

Ans<sup>r</sup> M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee is a native of Virg<sup>a</sup>. The bulk of his fortune, and that not inconsiderable is in Virginia. — He Sir is known both in America & London to have been the firm invariable friend of America and Opposer of the British measures — He was an Alderman of London, which place and his Aldermanship he quitted with all possible dispatch as soon as he knew his Country had occasion for his services on the Continent of Europe — In the same Vol where Senex and his party find M<sup>r</sup> Lee an Alderman of London, he may find Dunmore Gov<sup>r</sup> of Virginia, Tryon of New York, Martin of N. Carolina &c<sup>e</sup>. But the ideas of Whiggism<sup>2</sup>

Charles-town by Mr. Bromfield? I fear, *Senex*, that notwithstanding the old name you have assumed, that you possess the follies of youth, which is certainly the season for credulity. Confidence is a plant of slow growth in an aged bosom, therefore you should have balanced a little before you gave into such implicit belief of all the wonderful things Mr. Deane has said of himself. You will do well to advise your friend to observe the Spanish Proverb for the future, ‘that he who lives in a glass house, should not begin to throw stones.’”

<sup>1</sup>Two illegible words and the following, “is if possible more radical than the rest” are here erased.

<sup>2</sup>The words “Whiggism &” are inserted above the line.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

& justice which govern Senex & his party incline them to condemn the friends of America for the publications of the Common enemy; it is to be presumed that the free and virtuous Citizens of America entertain very different ideas of justice. They will consider the characters of Men, not by what the enemy publish, or a factious junto, but will let them stand or fall in their opinion by facts clearly proved, and not by malicious suppositions, suggestions and dark innuendos — If the Servants of the public are to be condemned in this manner, if such little Maneouvres are to destroy the reputation of Men who came into their Countries cause from the beginning & have been among the foremost in supporting it — If such shall be the case, I fear Virtue will retire, and the public affairs be conducted by Men whose councils will tread *back* with great quickness those steps to glorious independence which the characters now abused have trodden with so much uniformity.

Before I conclude I must observe that D<sup>r</sup> Franklin was appointed in the winter of 1776 Commissioner for Spain, and continued in his appointment for France at the same time. That in the summer following, Congress being informed by the Comrs that they had agreed Dr. Lee sh<sup>d</sup> go to Spain, and that he was actually gone there, the like powers were sent to him that were formerly sent to Dr. Franklin. When the conclusions of the Alliance had finished the business of the Commissioners in France, Congress appointed D<sup>r</sup> Franklin Minister Plenepotentiary to France, which most effectually superseded all former commissions as well to M<sup>r</sup> Adams as to D<sup>r</sup> Lee. And this was done sometime before Mr. D<sup>s</sup> publications and not unknown to him it is presumed, as it was generally known in Philadelphia. What now Senex must the honest and candid part of the world think of you and your friend



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

for thus attempting to impose upon the "free and virtuous Citizens of<sup>1</sup> America"?

DETECTOR.

TO SILAS DEANE<sup>2</sup>

TO MR SILAS DEANE

[*Circ.* January 22<sup>d</sup>, 1779.]

As you and your party have thought proper, to call the Public attention to your sufferings and your doings, I suppose you mean that a fair and full investigation of both these should take place. This, indeed, is rendered the more necessary, as you have charged the Representatives of the United States with shutting their ears against you, and as you have endeavored to injure the reputations of men, who have been thought by the Whiggish part of their country to have deserved well of the Public, by an early and active support of the American cause, against our cruel enemies. You ought to have considered, that the virtuous citizens of America, — among whom I will not class the Tories, who are, I am well informed, with you to a man, — could not in reason or in justice be pleased with such a procedure, unless you adduced the clearest proofs in support of plain and substantial charges: that the industrious circulation of a thousand hand bills, besides Gazette Publications, gave your conduct much more the air of faction, and design to create division, than to serve the Public cause. You will find before I have done with you, that my materials are good, and that I have taken pains to be well informed. We will begin with the time when your patriotic countrymen thought proper to remove you from Congress, because then your supposed sufferings and doings commenced. Were you

<sup>1</sup> The words "America the United Sta" are here erased.

<sup>2</sup> A. dr. L. University of Virginia, Lee Papers. Presented by Mr. Worthington C. Ford. The letter is signed "Economist."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

not bound on a Voyage to France in the spring of the year 1776, on private speculations of your own? Then you were taken into employment by two Committees of Congress, for one of which you were to purchase some goods, and to receive for and transmit to the other such political intelligence as you might be able to collect in consequence of letters you carried from that Committee or some of its Members, and you were authorized to procure four able Engineers.

We are told by yourself and your party that you were ignorant of the Language, unacquainted with the manners and customs of the Country, or the politics of the Court, an entire stranger without funds even for your support, opposed by the interest and lies of the British Ambassador, and by the bad success of our arms, and the want of Intelligence, yet that your great talents and powerful negotiation procured those large supplies of military stores that arrived in the spring of 1777. This tale might possibly have succeeded in times of antient superstition, but it will meet with few of credulity enough to swallow it, in the present age. Truth is simple, and will gain more easy belief. The justice of our cause had gained us many friends, whilst the pride, the abased power and the insolence of G. B., had made her many enemies in Europe, and long before you arrived there, the most absolute assurance was given to Dr. Lee in London, that we should be supplied to a great amount, and that the supplies should come in the very form that they afterwards arrived under, and most certainly this would have been the case, had you never existed. This the Dr. communicated to Congress in summer of 1776. Yet you and your party have given you the whole merit of this business, without even assigning any to the generous friends that so nobly furnished us. More modesty would become you better.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Let us now see how you executed the limited instructions of procuring 4 Engineers. You entered into written Contracts with a host of Officers, from the ensign to the Major General. The expenses, the pay, the commands, and the pensions of these gentlemen, astonished Congress, enraged the Army, and produced a heavy expence for defraying the charges of their return to France. And we are now informed, that you finally proposed a German Commander in Chief for the army! These things strongly denote that species of intoxication which sudden elevation often produces, and by the manner in which you have behaved, since you returned to America, it appears that sober reason has not yet resumed its seat. Your party have endeavored to gloss these unjustifiable contracts by displaying the abilities and worth of these Officers. Admit their worth to be as great as you please, is this a reason for violating the letter of your instructions. The Congress was best qualified to judge how far the particular state of our Affairs would suffer the admission of foreign officers, however able, and the Congress limited you to four Engineers. The next apology is, that it was dangerous to offend the great patrons of these officers. Both reason and experience destroy this excuse. Reasonable Men could not be offended with your refusing to make breach of positive instructions which might involve you in disgrace, them in disappointment, and produce the most pernicious consequences in America. And accordingly we find no inconvenience arose from such refusal after Dr. Franklin and Mr. Lee arrived. The manner in which the Army recoiled at these contracts, rendered it improper, exclusive of other considerations, to ratify them. The reason assigned by Congress in their replies delivered to some of these officers reprobating your conduct, rendered your recall necessary. This, you know, was the true cause of

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

your return, and not the injurious motives you have ascribed to others. It is true that some time after Mr. Adams had been appointed your successor, a motion was made and carried, for letting you down as easily, as the resolution you have published does.

Let us attend now to another of your doings, or rather misdoings, for this had like to have produced very serious consequences. Every thinking man will immediately discover that it was your bounden duty to secure the favor and friendship of the Court of France, by the most scrupulous attention to your conduct. The service of your Country demanded it, and the clearest policy suggested it. But altho' you had the sense of the Court previously and fully signified, you set the Reprisal, the Lexington and the Dolphin, to cruise on the English against that sense; and lastly, you caused Cunningham's Cutters to be fitted out at Dunkirk for the same cruising business, not only against the desires of the Court of France, but the express orders of the Committee to Mr. Hodge, who was directed to lay his letters before you, and follow your advice. We will consider this affair of the Cutters with some attention, because it is very explanatory of a jobbing character. The Committee directed two quick sailing cutters to be purchased and sent to America, with stores, and so contrived as to be fit for good cruisers on this coast afterwards. You was to advise about the execution of this business, and how did you do it — Were they ever sent here, Were they not made a mixt business of public and private concern? Were not 100,000 livres at least of the public money employed in fitting and refitting them? Were not they sent to cruise first on the coast of England, against the desires of France and the orders of Congress, instead of bringing stores here for the Army? Did they not offend first the Court of France and then the Court of Spain by the prizes they



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

took. — Were not those prizes consigned to private hands, first in Europe and then in the West Indies, instead of being delivered to the Agents of the U.S. in both these places. Have they not finally been sold, without public authority, to private use, and has the money been brought to the public credit? Has not Capt. Cunningham complained for himself and his officers at finding themselves changed from public officers, as they thought they were, to persons in private service? Answer these questions fully and fairly. The Public Interest requires that you should. But I suppose it will be said again, that answers to such questions will criminate yourself. You and your party are not aware how plainly such an objection admits the existence of guilt. We are told likewise of the complimentary letters you have received from Count de Vergennes, in the King's and his own name. When you furnish the public with these, will you also publish a letter of the same great minister to you, complaining in the strongest terms of your conduct in those instances I have mentioned, of the Reprisal, Lexington and Dolphin, and his letter to Monsieur Grand on the same subject, and of the Cutters fitted at Dunkirk? For if the compliments paid to an American Commissioner, after the American arms had placed our cause on high ground, is shewn to procure praise to him, we ought to know how the conduct of the same Commissioner had liked to have embroiled our officers before success had done away his follies there — to call it by no harder name. I hope these letters will be published, because they prove demonstrably the sense of the Court concerning your demerits, and also the generous and friendly sentiments for America which such ill usage on your part could not remove. It is not unknown to you what a strong tendency this business had to alienate from each other the affections of France and

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America. The two instances I have mentioned prove your unfitness for a political agent, and the last goes still further. Superadded to these, your accounts for the expenditure of 37 . . . livres, besides prize money, have never been exhibited, and you must be conscious that the desire of Dr. Lee to have this settlement made long before your recall, [though] you evaded it, was the original cause of, and has continued, the ill-founded quarrel you have instituted against him.

Yet both public duty and private honor loudly called for this settlement. The alliance was a natural consequence of the success of our brave Countrymen in the field. Yet it appears that you and your party would take all merit from these, from the generosity of France, and from the Councils of America, in order to adorn your brow with this happy event and its future consequences. Having considered your doings, let me shortly dismiss your sufferings, as the ideal nature of them must be very apparent. Consider your humble station in your own Country, and then say, if you were made to suffer by being translated to the elegancies of a refined Capital at the public expense. The idea is ridiculous, therefore I have done with it.

I will now proceed to consider your misrepresentations and calumnious innuendos, against the character of the gentlemen you have traduced. You say "I was honored with one colleague and saddled with another." For shame, Mr. Deane! Reflect on what you was, and then determine the propriety of that vain expression. "Saddled" with Whom? With a man who had acquired reputation in two of the learned professions, of fair character, and of an antient and honorable family in Virginia, and who had industriously employed his literary abilities in defending the American cause, so as to have acquired the extremest hatred and detestation of our enemies! Who left a

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situation in which he might have made a rapid fortune by practising the law, to serve his country in the station Congress had called him to. You mean to insinuate that inordinate ambition and undue influence, has produced the appointments held by Messrs. Wm. and Arthur Lee. You know the contrary and therefore you are the less excusable. I will relate the manner in which the latter became appointed to the Court of Spain. In the winter of '76 Congress appointed Dr. Franklin to be Commissioner for Spain, and, being uncertain whether that Court would receive or admit the residence of a Commissioner, they continued Dr. Franklin a Commissioner to France also. In the meantime Dr. Franklin, being unwilling or unable to undertake the oppressive business of crossing the Pyrenees in the winter season, and you pretending the necessity of going to Holland, where you never went, both joined in persuading Dr. Lee to go to Spain, remaining yourselves in the ease and splendor of Paris. Dr. Lee's zeal in his country's cause induced him to undertake the onerous journey from which you shrunk. When your letter informed Congress in the summer of 1777 that not Dr. Franklin, but Dr. Lee had, by your joint advice gone to Spain, it was thought expedient to send the same commission to Dr. Lee that had before been given to Dr. Franklin, and he was continued for France upon the same principle as Dr. Franklin had before been. You know that Dr. Franklin had been, previously to Dr. Lee, appointed both for France and Spain at the same time. Why did you conceal this from the public in your account? Because it did not suit your purpose of insinuating that ambition and influence joined these appointments in Dr. Lee. And for purposes equally honest and candid you have assigned other than the right reasons for Dr. Lee's going no further than Burgos. You



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know perfectly well that the political situation of that Court did not admit of receiving a Commissioner from America at Madrid, and even tho' your "venerable colleague" had continued in the appointment, he could not have been received at Madrid. Again, to save yourselves trouble, you persuaded Dr. Lee to travel to Prussia. The same zeal for his country carried him there also. The British envoy contrived to have his doors forced and locks pickt, whilst he was at Dinner. You ought not to [have] insinuated this as a fault, but have candidly told the manner in which the papers were robbed, and the speedy effectual means used to recover them before the evil doer could avail himself of them. It is certain that Mr. Elliot gained no credit by this manoeuvre. And when the time for promulgation comes, it will be seen that in both these negotiations, Dr Lee accomplished as much as the nature and situation of things admitted at the time. For the honor of human nature, I am sorry to say, after what you have written, that you know this to be true. But your designs in the publication that goes under your name will be further evident to the Public, when they are made acquainted that Dr. Lee was not commissioned for France, but for Spain only, several weeks before you published the appointment of Dr. Franklin as plenipotentiary for France, superseding the commissions both of Mr. Adams and Dr. Lee at that Court. It would be an endless work to follow you in all your intrigues and insinuations to injure the character of Dr. Lee, a great part of whose life has been employed in defending with his pen the cause of America and its friends. Even your "venerable colleague" has experienced heretofore the benefits of Dr. Lee's pen, when he was pursued by the British Ministry. But the candid public will require other proofs before they suffer Dr. Lee to be injured in their es-

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teem, than the calumnious assertions of a man embittered against him, because he called for a settlement of the public accounts, and endeavored to prevent the wasting of the public treasure.

Your next attack is upon Mr. Wm. Lee and here again I must charge you with sinning against knowledge, and hope to make good my charge. You say "in Feb<sup>y</sup> 1777, I received a notification of the appointment of Wm. Lee, Esq., to be one of your commercial agents in Europe, of which I gave him notice. As your commercial affairs were at that time in such a state" (Why did you not say who put them in that state? Were you afraid to wound some of your party?) "as to require much attention and care, I pressed this gentleman, then in England, to come over immediately and execute his office, but heard nothing from him till the month of June, when he arrived at Paris. At this place he continued until about some time in August, when he went to Nantes." You are an adept at managing dates to answer your purposes. Your design here was to render Mr. Lee's affections suspected by a display of remissness, delay and apprehension of mischief to his affairs in England. You therefore take advantage of the whole month of February, because you fix on no day in that month, and you proceed "*of which I gave him notice.*" The conclusion you mean to inculcate is that you gave notice in February, and tho' you pressed him to come over immediately, yet he came not until June. This conclusion would suit your purpose exactly. Mr. Lee is now absent, endeavoring to serve his Country in Germany, therefore not in a capacity to defend himself. But in a letter of the 31<sup>st</sup>. July to his friends, from Paris, he writes: "Some time in April, your friend received a letter in London from Mr. D., one of the Commissioners *just mentioning the appointment, and desiring*

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*to know whether he would accept of the trust. You say, you pressed him to come over immediately and execute his office. I hope your original letter for the honor of your veracity will appear hereafter."*

Mr. Lee goes on saying he "arrived in the beginning of June, applied to the commissioners, Messrs. F. and D. (Mr. L. being absent) for his appointment and instructions, which he supposed they had kept for him till he arrived, was told that they knew nothing about either. However, they both complained grievously of the conduct of Mr. Morris, and advised your friend to wait here, as a Mr. Ross was gone to Nantes to attempt to make a settlement with Mr. M. Accordingly he staid, and a very few days after he *was told* that Mr. Morris had been possessed of the appointment and instructions for some time; your friend accordingly sets off for Nantes to-morrow to enter on his mission." Mr. Lee's next letter is dated, Nantes, 12th August, 1777. "I wrote you twice since my being in this country, but as they may miscarry, I must again mention that it is above two months since I came to the continent, in consequence of information I received *late in April*, that I was honored with the appointment of superintending the public commercial concerns in Europe. The mortifications I have met with are not easily to be described, and they are not lessened by receiving advice this day from London, that the utmost vengeance of the enemy will be speedily exercised against me and mine. The sacrifice I have made of honors, property, &c., would very little affect me, if I found myself armed with sufficient powers to do any effectual public service, and met with people more disposed to forward the general utility than to gratify their own pride and promote their individual interest. I have never received a line from the Committee, or any of my particular friends for near

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18 months past. This moment while writing, Mr. Morris has sent me some letters from the Committee, directed to us jointly and mentioning our appointment. I shall now proceed with confidence." I have seen, but have it not now by me, [a] copy of a letter from Mr. John Ross at Nantes to you, Mr. Deane, at Paris, informing you that Mr. Thos. Morris had kept up Mr. Wm. Lee's appointment, but that he was then willing to deliver it, and urging you to press Mr. Lee to come and put the commercial affairs into order, as they were much deranged. As Mr. Ross is known to be no friend of Mr. Lee's, this letter, which I hope will be published hereafter, confirms beyond a doubt what Mr. Lee has written as above. And they certainly leave you without excuse for concealing this circumstance from the public and insinuating that Mr. Lee's delay arose from other causes. Let us see what foundation you had for your other assertions, that Mr. Lee delayed going to Vienna,—that he is political and commercial Agent at the same time, &c., &c. On the 7th. October, Mr. Wm. Lee writes: "Just this moment is put into my hands the instructions and appointment to Vienna and Berlin." The following will clearly shew that Mr. William Lee considered his acceptance of the political appointment as discharging him from the commercial agency. He writes from Paris, November 24th., 1777: "The line that Congress has thought proper to place me in, I rather doubt my abilities to succeed in agreeable to their wishes; but on mature consideration I have resolved to enter on the service, because I do not know whom they could get here, that is unemployed, to execute these necessary functions better than myself. And because I find from experience that it is not in my power to render the public any essential services in the mercantile line, since Mr. Deane has *in fact* taken upon himself the



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authority of suspending the Secret Committee's appointment of Mr. Thos. Morris and myself as mercantile Agents, by appointing Mr. Jonathan Williams, a young man of about 22 years old and nephew to Dr. Franklin, as Agent for the public business in Nantes, and ordered him to take charge of selling all prizes made by Continental armed Vessels, giving orders at the same time to the Captains to put their prizes into Mr. Williams' hands, tho' he knows perfectly well, that the sale of prizes was expressly committed to Mr. Morris and myself, by the joint Committee (see their letter of Oct. 25th. 1775, to Mr. T. M.). In this last business, Mr. D. says he acted with the approbation and consent of Dr. Franklin, but the letters on the subject, I am well informed, both to Mr. Williams and the Captains, are signed by Mr. Deane alone. His view in appointing Mr. Williams must be so evident, that I have no occasion to mention it. I could not therefore continue to act for the public, without coming to an open rupture with Mr. Deane, which at this critical moment might be attended with bad consequences to our public. In fact the public business in this country has been, and is likely to continue in very strange disorder, nor is it likely to mend *until the Secret Committee confine all their mercantile business to their Mercantile Agent, and keep the Commissioners to their political duty, which may be neglected from too much attention to private schemes of commerce, on public funds, and contemptible private jobs.* I am now out of the question; therefore cannot be charged with partiality in my advice, as the Commissioners have already received in money three mil. 187.500 livres for your use, is it not incumbent on you to call immediately for an account of the expenditure of this money? Certainly you ought without a day's delay. I have just discharged what I think my duty, in thus giving you a true state of your

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affairs here, and shall *from henceforth take my leave of this department*, keeping my attention entirely confined to the charge which is committed to my care. So strangely is business managed here, that it is now above a fortnight since I have been waiting for a copy of the Treaty to propose to Vienna and Berlin, and have not yet got it from the Commissioners, tho' there are 3 or 4 hangers on that are maintained at the public expense, and for some of whom there will probably be a charge made as Secretary to the Commission."

On the 3d. of december, Mr. Lee writes thus: "The Commissioners have not yet furnished me with the necessary papers for my Northern expedition; as soon as they do, I shall set out." He writes "The last express from Boston that sailed October 31, got here the 4th. instant with Congress despatches of October 15th. I think. He brings Burgoyne's capitulation." By this we see that the Burgoyne news arrived at Paris the 4th. Dec., and by Mr. Lee's letters 24th. November and 3<sup>d</sup> December already quoted, that he had long before the news of that event arrived, been waiting only for the necessary papers from the Commissioners.

These letters, Mr. Deane, place your candor and designs in an eminent point of view. Yet you say "when the news of General Burgoyne's defeat and surrender arrived, it produced a revolution in the minds of many, and among others, inspired your Commercial Agent and political Commissioner, the Hon. Wm. Lee, Esq., with some degree of activity in your favor." You know, Mr. Deane, that before Mr. Wm. Lee received from the Commissioners the necessary papers, for the conduct of his negotiation in the north, the death of Mr. Thomas Morris and the state of our commercial affairs, occasioned the Commissioners to propose that Mr. Lee should visit Nantes, before he set out for Vienna, and they applied to Court for a royal order to

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the Crown Officers to deliver Mr. Lee the papers of Mr. Morris, to enable the former to adjust the public commercial affairs of the United States before he left France. Mr. Lee therefore writes from Paris, 8th February, 1778, "The death of Mr. Thos. Morris at Nantes obliges me to go down there (a disagreeable journey) to settle and regulate the commercial affairs of the Secret Committee before my departure for Germany, which will be immediately on my return here." You are not unacquainted with the rude and indecent obstructions that Mr. Lee met with from Mr. Ross in the execution of his duty at Nantes. On his return to Paris, Mr. William Lee writes, 28th February, 1778, "Being only detained for the Commissioners to finish the necessary proceedings relative to Mr. Morris' papers; which being done I shall set out immediately for Vienna. According to the usual mode of doing business here, that which ought not to take up more than 2 or 3 hours, will I expect keep me here 10 or 12 days. *The political and mercantile character should be entirely* distinct and separate, and both of them executed by persons of your express appointment. If this regulation does not take place soon, an infinite deal of mischief will inevitably ensue. More money comes in here from voluntary contributions, than will furnish all the supplies you want, and pay the interest of all the money you have borrowed in America, for the expenditure of which (money borrowed in Europe) no account is rendered nor can any be procured." It is remarkable that you quarrel with Mr. William Lee for concealing his appointment, and blame Dr. Lee for making known his; you admit Mr. Lee came to France in consequence of his appointment to the Commercial Agency, yet you insinuate that he remained inactive least he should injure his Aldermanship and his affairs in England. Strange that he should come to



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France that he might preserve his Aldermanship by inactivity, when remaining in London would have preserved it more effectually with much less trouble! Yours is a clumsy calumny, to say the least of it.

Let me now examine the texture of that calumnious web with which you wish to entrap the reputation of Mr. R. H. Lee. You first take much pains to persuade the public that Dr. Berkenhout was a Ministerial Agent, and having done this as you hoped, you proceed to adduce the evidence of the Tory you had made, to injure the reputation of a Whig, whose conduct since the first commencement of Congress has rendered him as obnoxious as any man living to the whole race of Tories. Your ally Plain Truth has pursued your example, and having between you innuendoes Mr. Lee into a connection with Mr. Berkenhout, that most inveterate of all Tories *Lieut. Col. Connolly* as Plain Truth calls him, is produced as a witness to blacken Berkenhout, thereby to injure Mr. Lee. If Whigs are to be destroyed by Tory evidence, the whole race of Whigs will presently be done away from the face of the earth. Mr. R. H. Lee has already given to the public his account of this affair. It seems that a person unknown to him, but formerly acquainted with his brother, upon the footing of that acquaintance, in a strange country, applies to Mr. Lee, informing him that his view in coming to America, was to settle in a land of liberty, and desires Mr. Lee's advice, where he should fix himself. Settlers being expressly allowed to come here by resolve of Congress, and Mr. Lee having no reason to suppose him to have other views than he professed, and his conversation expressing the strongest attachment to the Independence of America, Mr. Lee treated him with civility, and when his name was mentioned in conversation, Mr. Lee said as he believed, that he esteemed Dr. Berkenhout to be a

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good Whig. What evidence have we to think the contrary now, but unmeaning tales, far fetched innuendoes, Tory evidence, and reports of conversations made by a man in *Petto* who may be as great a Tory as Mr. Connolly? and after all, suppose Dr. Berkenhout had been a Tory, how could Mr. Lee know it? The power of penetrating men's hearts, there to discover views that are in opposition to their words and actions, is not the property of man. The accounts I have given, Mr. Deane, are founded on original letters and unquestionable facts, which, if you or your party can disprove, produce your evidence.

When you inserted in your Address part of a letter supposed to have been written by Dr. Lee after the Treaty was signed, did you intend to give or conceal the true means by which Mr. Fox came to know that the Treaty was concluded? I have seen the copy of a certificate given by a Mr. Livingston, who declares he saw a letter from Dr. Bancroft to his correspondent in London, long before the Treaty was signed, advising him to push his speculations, for he had it from the best authority, that the Treaty would be signed the 4th. or 5th. of February. Mr. Livingston knew the Dr's hand well, and certifies he believed the above letter to be his hand writing. It is more than probable that you know what authority furnished Dr. Bancroft with this information, as you acknowledge that gentleman to be your principal friend and councillor. Nor is it unlikely, that you could unfold, if you would, what those speculations were. Lord North told Mr. Hartley that the American Commissioners were jobbing in the British funds, and will you affirm that you know nothing of your clerk or secretary, or any person with your knowledge, going to London on this business? But of this more hereafter.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO PATRICK HENRY<sup>1</sup>

BELLEVUE, Feb'y 10, 1779.

MY DEAR SIR,

I'm here in my way to Congress. I have seen the Tyrant's speech to his corrupt Parliament last November. It breathes war altogether, and renders it of the last importance to be prepared with a strong Army to defeat his wicked purposes. Dr. Lee writes me in Nov'r that Gen. Howe is to return to the command here, and he says "Moloch's principle prevails with the absolute ruler of these measures, in which if he cannot hope for victory he expects revenge." Mr. Wm. Lee writes from Frankfort, Oct'r 15, "At all events I am determined to attend to the appointment of Virginia. My brother and myself have already done a good deal, and I am now endeavoring to borrow money to complete their orders, and you may assure the State that I will do everything that is possible to comply with all their orders." The Emperor and the King of Prussia have gone into winter quarters without having fought a battle. The former winters in Bohemia, the latter Silesia and Saxony. The effort seems to have been to winter the Prussians in Bohemia, but this has been prevented, notwithstanding the very great military Talents of the king of Prussia and his brother. Holland appears much more inclined to our side than that of England — It is probable the latter will fail of getting monied assistance from the Dutch. Mons'r Penet is now on his way to look at our Cannon works near Richmond. This Gentleman combined, I understand, with persons of much ability, have imported and proposed to import more than 200 work-

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 223.

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men, the most able in the art of making small Arms complete, and casting all kinds of Cannon. They propose doing everything at their own expense, and to supply on contract any number of completely fitted Muskets or Cannon at a fixed price. They want only a fit place to sit down on. Your wisdom and patriotism will discover in a moment how extensively useful it will be to our Country to have these people fixed with us. A just estimate being put on our works and their Arms, We may thus be repaid in a most useful manner the expense we have already incurred, which will otherways, I fear, be lost altogether. To be independent of external aid for these primary articles of defence, is surely a most capital object. I really think that it would require at least 100,000 stand of good arms, and more than an hundred pieces of Cannon to put our state in a proper posture of defence. If you view this matter in the light that I do, Mr. Penet will, I am sure, meet with all possible encouragement. I have the honor to be with great esteem, dear Sir, your most affectionate and obedient servant,

P.S.—The Deaneans I find are aiming at an occlusion of the Press, except for the admission of their libels. Monopolised Press and Monopolised Commerce will never do for a free Country.

His Excellency PATRICK HENRY.

TO [WILLIAM AYLETT]<sup>1</sup>

DEAR SIR,

BELLEVUE 10 Feby 1779.

Some time in the summer or Fall last, the commiss<sup>y</sup> General had orders from Congress to purchase

<sup>1</sup> A. dr. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 279. Aylett was deputy commissary general of purchases in Virginia; see Ford, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, X. 49; XIII. 391.

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in Virg<sup>a</sup> & Maryl<sup>d</sup><sup>1</sup> a considerable quantity of Flour for the use of the french Fleet, and it was directed to be stored in such safe and convenient places, as that it might not be in danger of the enemy or obstructions from the ice when there was occasion to remove it. I have no manner of doubt, from the known ability and industry of Col<sup>o</sup> Wadsworth and yourself but that you have the requisite flour ready for the call of France. I yesterday evening received a letter from Mons<sup>r</sup> Gerard, the Minister of France at Philadelphia, informing me that this flour was much relied on,<sup>2</sup> that Vessels were now on their way to Chesapeake to receive it, and that Captain Veillon would be in Virginia in a few days to see the flour shipped. As it is of infinite consequence<sup>3</sup> that our good and able friends and Ally should want nothing, that it is in our power to furnish, and as it is an object of great importance to the common cause, I make no doubt but that you will exert all your powers to supply the flour wanted immediately. I think Col. Wadsworth told me that he had directed you should purchase *all* the flour you could in Virginia, as he did not imagine that *all* would be too much for the double use of France & our Army. I shall esteem it a particular favor, if you will write me to Philadelphia by return of Post, how you are provided with flour, what quantity you have for the french fleet, and where it is stored.

I am with much esteem and friendship, dear Sir  
your most affectionate and obedient Servant.

<sup>1</sup> The preceding four words are inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> The word "and" is here erased.

<sup>3</sup> Substituted for "importance" erased.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [ARTHUR LEE] <sup>1</sup>

FREESTONE VIRGINIA Feby. 11.

1779

MY DEAR BROTHER,

As well as the shortness of my time will permit, I will give you the best detail in my power of things here since I wrote you fully by the Marquis Fayette of the state of our politics and parties. The wicked intrigues which you experienced from a certain set, and of which you have often and justly complained, have been practiced here to a still greater and m[ore ———<sup>2</sup>] mischievous length. The Tories avail themselves of it, and they are to a man [on] Deane's side, hoping thereby to injure and deprive us of influence whose determined will and capacity to injure their cause they well know and fear. Deane's party in short rests on triple ground. The first and most considerable is Toryism, the second and next most considerable is Commercial plunder, the third is Ambition. These last are few in number but artful, intriguing, and want now, when our affairs look well, to come into yours & our b.<sup>3</sup> Williams places, which they would not have dared even to have accepted before the late happy change of our affairs, by the Alliance with France. Soon after I wrote by the Marquis Fayette I left Philadelphia the 3d of Nov. having been between 6 and 7 months from my family and qui[te] worn down with constant attention to public business. As I came . . . . . up to Congress where he has been ever since. After I came away a month, Deane published his libel of decr. 5 as you see in one of the papers now sent. The bold and impudent assertions, the dark inuendos,

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Harvard University Library, Lee Mss., VI. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Illegible word.

<sup>3</sup> For "brother."

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and the art with which the whole is wrought up, had it seems such an effect in Phila. as to excite Tumults there in his favor. And to the Southward here it had very ill, tho not such violent effects, because there are fewer Tories here to aid its operation. In the enemies quarters the city of N. York it created the most extravagant joy and underwent republication. These Intriguers who are wickedly working their own private benefit, do infinitely more injury to the common cause than all the power of our enemy can effect. Before they came here our business was going on with unanimity and with wisdom, since their arrival discord and faction have reared their baneful heads to the unimaginable injury of our affairs. The affair of Berkenhout, on which this Libeller has insinuated evil against me was the most trifling of all things. The man was a perfect Stranger to me, and came to me solely on the ground of a former acquaintance with my brother. I received him civilly and he told me he came to seek a situation for his family, and asked my advice where he shd. fix. I gave him the best advice I could. He appeared to me most strongly attached to the independence of America, and I did and do believe him to have been honestly so. I do not think we changed above an hundred words together, for I was too much engaged in pub. business. He was arrested on no other ground than a paragraph in an English Newspaper. After this I never saw him. Having detained him in prison a few days they discharged and sent him back to N. York having no evidence to prove anything against him. This is the whole of that affair. The wicked fallacies against you and our b. Wm. you both know. The greater part I know to be abominably false. Deane has since given in a written narrative to Congress in which I am informed his only charges against you are that you are jealous, suspicious, affron-



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tive to all who come near you, that you hate the french, and show it in all your conduct and conversation. Mr. Wm. Lee is mean he says and goes shares with the Agents he has appointed. This latter charge I presume Mr. Lee can, and I hope he will furnish to Congress the most ample disproof of. The charges against you in his Narrative to Congress are absolute jargon the greatest part of them. His printed libel against you it may be proper to attend to in every part & get the clearest proof of falsehood where the nature of the thing admits. For in many cases he deals so in inuendo, that a kind of negative proof, impossible to be produced, can alone refute him. For too many people are inconsiderate enough not to demand proof of him for such charges before they credit them. He and his party are now working to get him to Holland and themselves in your places. What may be their success God only knows. I am now on my way to Congress having been long detained at home by excessive bad weather and the Gout. Deane affirmed to Congress upon honor that he was not engaged in Trade, nor had been except in two small ventures at first which turned out to loss. It might be very important to have his commercial connections clearly developed and proved. I have sent to the Virginia Press the other day a vindication of you and our b. Wm. against Deane's libel wherein I have disproved some of his charges from original letters. I hope this will have a good effect. All sensible Whigs in this Country, and now the herd of Mankind begins to see clearly into Deane and his party. But he has a very strong and very artful party in <sup>1</sup> . . . and by means of commercial connections a considerable . . . . . in almost every . . .<sup>2</sup> In the eastern States where he is well known he has by

<sup>1</sup> A word in cipher occurs here.

<sup>2</sup> Words in cipher are here omitted.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

far the fewest supporters. Indeed he has very few of them. Those people are wise, attentive, sober, diligent & frugal which are qualities not fit for [De]ane's purposes. . . .<sup>1</sup>

It does not [app]ear to me that the publication of Common Sense on Deane's affair merited all that high resentment shewn to it. The honest writer had in view to disrobe Deane of the gaudy vest he had assumed as being the sole author and procurer of all the supplies that come here in 1777. But you [see] that under this it has been so contrived as to get a general condemnation of all his publications on this subject. Although the greater part relates solely to Deane, and many honest truths are told and properly pressed. It wounded the party very deeply I fancy, and there was no other way to prevent the public effects it would certainly have had otherwise. And will yet in a great degree, for I am informed that the people here do by no means agree with Congress in the general condemnation of these papers. As to the noise about its being said that the United States might make treaty with England with the consent of their Ally if war was not declared — I do not believe that any one Man of sense, or member ever said or thought anything like it. 'Tis mere pretense. For myself I know that I would sooner cease to live than I would agree in any manner or for any pretext to desert our Ally for whom I feel infinite gratitude and reverence. You know perfectly well how long and how ardently my Soul has panted after this connection with France. Perhaps there was not another man in America so enthusiastically strenuous for the measure as myself. Indeed as Shandy says it was my Hobby Horse. And now a pack of rascals would insinuate (for their private purposes) that I would injure the measure I have been so uniformly

<sup>1</sup> Several lines partly in cipher are here omitted.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

and so warmly promoting. Two days ago I recd. your letter of 6 & 29th. Sept. 14 & [1]5? Novr. & our brother of 15 & 21 of October. That is one copy of each. I understood there are letters for me from you both at Philadelphia with F. L. L. I have not time now to write to Mr. Wm. Lee. Therefore I pray you to give him the contents of this letter, and tell him we will consider maturely about selling his estate. I do not think it will now be done. We have not yet indeed received his powers [that?] continues. He has put about 2200 pounds of our brothers money in the Loan Office. The Tobo. of last year is not yet sold. The Loan Office certificates are transferable and do pass in circulation. They [are a] very vendible commodity. The pub pays the principal in 3 years and t[he] interest of 6 pr. Cent annually. But a tax in our State takes off one pr. Cent on the interest both in the Loan Office & all other interest. I will write again by the first opportunity, but I could not omit this, which I believe to be a good one, as Capt. Robinson is a most worthy Man, and is Captain in the Continental Navy. We are filling up our Regiments and preparing for another Campaign. We hear that since the repulse of St. Lucia, the Count D 'Estaing has been reinforced and has retaken St. Lucia & taken St. Vincents with four English Frigates. I believe and I hope this is true. Admiral Byron has been so long sailed with 9 ships tis sa[id] for the W Indies, and not heard of that we begin to entertain h[opes] that some of these high gales of wind, that have been so frequent within these 4 months past, have done his business for him. God of his infinite mercy grant it may be so. Nothing could save the common cause so much as stopping these abominable intrigues and factions here. . . .<sup>1</sup> For my part, I see so clearly that the man

<sup>1</sup> Several lines partly in cipher are here omitted.

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who serves the public in public service that I am resolved to send my resignation to our Assembly next April. My family suffers immensely by my absence, and I have now 7 children and another coming to take care of. Let Ludwell come as soon as think him qualified to pu[rsue] here the study of the practical part of the Attorneys business and to in[form] himself of the Municipal law of this State. I mean when his foun[dation is] well laid. Propose to my brother Wm. to send Thom, if he approves and thinks the expence will be warranted by the prospects, to settle an acquaintance in Holland & the ports of France, perhaps Spain, so as to get consignments when he returns here qualified, which I wish may be soon as possible. He should be impressed before he goes on such a Tour, if he does go, with the necessity of much gravity, sobriety, and attention to business wherever he is. And to take Memorandums of their Trading customs wherever he goes.

I am most affectionately and faith[fully]  
yours.

P.S. Take all imaginable pains effectually to vindicate your own char[acter].

It would be of infinite consequence to get the Dutch into our Alliance and the acknowledgment of our Independence.

Mrs. Lee of this place desires love to her Aunt and to hear from her. Colo. H. Lee would be glad you could drop . . . a letter with a State of Deanes misconduct which he will promulgate. Send me some more Bark and tell Mr. Wm. L[ee we] shall suffer greatly at Chantilly witht. 4 pieces of Shirting Linnen.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO PATRICK HENRY<sup>1</sup>

PHILA., Feb'y 28, 1779.

MY DEAR SIR,

I arrived here on the 19th, thro the worst roads that I ever travelled over. I find business of faction here pretty much at an end by the thorough exposure of its author, Mr. Silas Deane, who, if I am rightly informed, regrets extremely his publication of December the 5<sup>th</sup>. But be this as it may, he has certainly gained nothing by it here in the public opinion. I inform you with pleasure Sir, that the King of France has formally agreed to rescind the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> articles of the treaty of Commerce, so that now, the only unequal parts being removed, it rests upon the liberal ground of fair equality in every part. We are certainly indebted to Dr. Lee's attention for this beneficial alteration, for which the honest voice of posterity will indubitably thank him when the poison of wicked faction shall cease to operate. The King of the two Sicilys has opened his ports to the vessels of the United States, which is a good omen of Spanish attachment to our cause. Indeed we have abundant reason to believe that Great Britain will not get assistance from any power in Europe to carry on the war against us, and already our good Ally has made great havoc among the Privateers and with the trade of our enemies. We hear that 7000 British Seamen are now prisoners in the jails of old France. Notwithstanding these favorable appearances it certainly behooves us to get a strong army in the field, as the enemy have yet here a strength sufficient to do much mischief if they are not properly opposed. From the best accounts that I

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 227.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

can collect, it appears that they have not less than 11,000 men at New York and Rhode Island. Yesterday accounts from Jersey told us the enemy had landed at Elizabeth Town, and had burned Gov. Livingston's house, and were advancing into the country. Our army was preparing to resist them, and if they do not quickly return I hope we shall give a good account of them. The enemy have published some curious letters of Mr. Braxton's which they have intercepted. I am informed they will be republished here, and when they are I will send you the paper.

I am with much esteem, dear Sir, affectionately yours,

His Excellency PATRICK HENRY Esq.

P.S. — The enemies attempt upon Gen. Maxwell in the Jerseys has turned out to our honour and their disgrace. Instead of surprising Gen. Maxwell, they themselves were surprised by his being prepared. The enemy were forced to retire with loss and disgrace, and without burning Livingston's house.

March 2.

### TO PATRICK HENRY<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA, March 3<sup>d</sup>, 1797.

SIR :

Your letter to the delegates of the 29<sup>th</sup> of Feb. has been laid before the marine committee, in consequence of the business of retaliation on Marine prisoners having been referred by Congress to that committee, as you will see by the resolve of July 27<sup>th</sup> last, which is inclosed. The committee make a distinction between

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 228. Signed by Lee as chairman of the Marine Committee.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

such prisoners as properly belong to a particular state, and such as are continental being made so by the arms of the U. S. The former each state will avail itself of for the benefit of their own people in the power of the enemy, as a Cartel can be agreed on with the enemy by such state, as hath been frequently done by the Eastern States. Or such prisoners may, at the pleasure of the state to whom they belong, be delivered to the Continental Commissary for common benefit. At present no Cartel has ever been, or could be, settled with the enemy for American prisoners in G. B. They being unwilling there to recognise us in such a light as Cartel would place us, and therefore their exchanges have been confined to prisoners in America only. We have however some reason to expect that the exchange may shortly extend to Great Britain. In the meantime, sir, the State of Virginia will see, by the resolve of Congress enclosed, what are the sentiments of this body on the subject of retaliation, and will adopt their mode, if it shall be thought proper, with such prisoners as belong immediately to the State of Virginia — I have the honor to be with sentiments of esteem and regard  
Sir, your most obedient and very humble servant,

His Excellency PATRICK HENRY Esq.

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA March 15. 1779

DEAR SIR,

I have not been unmindful of the small commission you gave me to procure the song and receipt for you. I once had these, but they are mislaid

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 23.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

so that I could not find them when I returned home from Williamsburg, or they should have been sent from thence. I have here applied to M<sup>r</sup> Peters for the one, and to M<sup>rs</sup> Shippen for the other, and I have hopes of getting them both. I send you herewith a small pamphlet containing a collection of such papers and proceedings as clearly defeats the calumny of the British Commissioners [c]harging this war to our ambition, when the Tyranny and avarice of the British Court most indubitably produced [a]nd has continued it.

That our enemies will not get aid from any power in Europe to carry on the war against us is very certain, and [th]e probability is great that Spain will speedily join in the war with France against England. Yet such is the temper of the British Court that it seems clear to me that nothing but the severest gripes of adversity and the last necessity can inspire wisdom and moderation. They certainly mean another campaign, a last effort; and Georgia & South Carolina, with the frontiers and sea coa[st] appear to be their objects at present. Whether Gen. Clinton will take the field or not must depend on the succors he shall receive and the strength of our army. The flatte[ring] royal visits that are industriously made to the Nobili[ty] and gentry of England may possibly give such energy to the militia as to enable the sending a small reenforcement from their national troops to Gen. Clin[ton.] With our present prospects every nerve should be strained to make our Army strong. By being prepared we shall have a moral certainty of defeating the designs of our enemies the next campaign, which will in my opinion put a glorious period to the war.

I am, with much esteem and affection yours.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [COLONEL DE KNOBELAUCH]<sup>1</sup>

PHILA 16 March 1779

SIR,

I am much concerned that the state of my health prevented me from seeing you when you did me the honor of calling at my lodgings, and my concern is very greatly increased by knowing that it is absolutely out of my power to<sup>2</sup> promote your views.<sup>3</sup> If Sir my powers were equal to my wishes which are founded on the conviction I have of your merit, most certainly you would be gratified in your desires. But I should think myself much to blame if I encouraged hopes where I was convinced that none can be entertained. The state of the army, the opinions of Congress on such cases, and the fact being that there are many more Officers of all ranks than Men to be commanded, will I fear render it impossible for you to succeed — Your situation affects me greatly, but how to better it, is a difficulty that I know not in which way to remove.

<sup>1</sup> A. dr. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 286. The draught is written on the back of Colonel de Knobelauch's letter of March 15 to Lee. A printed text of de Knobelauch's letter to Lee is in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, April, 1860, p. 269. Lieutenant Colonel B. de Knobelauch was one of the foreigners seeking a commission in the Continental Army. Recommended to Congress and to General Washington by Benjamin Franklin and William Lee, he pressed his claims with such success on Congress that although it was found impracticable to employ him in the army "agreeable to his wishes," that body finally ordered a grant to him of \$10,000 to cover the expenses of his return to Europe and of his residence in America. Ford, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, XIII. 443; XV. 1069, 1070.

<sup>2</sup> The word "assist" is here erased.

<sup>3</sup> The words "as you have expected them in your favor of the 15 instant" are here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I have the honor to be with real esteem and regard  
Sir your most obedient and very humble  
Servant.

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA March 23. 1779.

MY DEAR SIR.

Give me leave to introduce to your friendly attention the Bearer George Mason esquire the Son of a Gentleman in Virginia whom I esteem among the number of my most valuable friends. This gentleman goes in search of health to some southern part of Europe, and being a stranger in France, I shall be in a particular manner obliged to you for every mark of friendship that you show him.

To Mr. Mason I refer you for our news, which indeed is not much — This opportunity coming suddenly on me I have not time to answer your favor lately received so particularly as I wish, therefore I shall defer it until one of our Continental vessels sails for France which I expect will be in a short time. I am now in great haste, but with perfect esteem, dear Sir your most sincerely affectionate friend.

TO JOHN PAGE<sup>2</sup>

DEAR SIR,

PHILADELPHIA April 4. 1779.

I have the honor to inclose you an extract of a letter from my brother William to my brother Frank, dated

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original supplied through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Emmet Collection, 1104. Addressed to him "at Williamsburg/Virginia."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

October the 15<sup>th</sup> 1778, by which it seems very clear that the Stores you apprehend to have been shipped in September and taken, were not shipped so soon, and therefore I hope may yet be safe. It will be a very unfortunate loss indeed, if the enemy have got them. But if this event has not already taken place, there will be less danger of it hereafter, as I expect that the measures we have taken will remove the enemies privateers from our coast. We have been informed here that the Roderique (Beaumarchais ship) was to sail in company with three or four large ships for Virginia — I expect that our Stores will come by some of them. It seems that Ford arrived in France from England and applied to the Commissioners representing that he had been made prisoner by the enemy in Virginia and carried to England, he shewed them his appointment of Chaplain to a Continental regiment, and by being in distress he prayed their help to get back to Virginia. They assisted him and he went to Nantes where he took his passage to America. He was taken by a Jersey privateer and made his escape a second time and got to Paris — Then it was that my brother seeing a person whom he had every reason to suppose a good Whig and a persecuted American, and at the same time wanting a Secretary, he employed this person whose abilities he found compitent to the business. But I am very certain that D<sup>r</sup> Lee will not continue Ford<sup>1</sup> an hour in his employment after he shall be informed that suspicion has justly fallen upon his character. Information on this subject was sent by the first opportunity after the Governors letter came to Congress.

A report prevails in New York that the Count D'Estaing has beaten Gen. Grant in S<sup>t</sup> Lucia and

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for "him" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that the British Troops to the southward are very sickly. Gen. Clinton lately undertook an expedition in the Sound, supposed against New London, but he has returned disappointed to N. York — The late violent Snow Storm, we hear, wrecked 14 of his Transports on Fishers Island. May the Arm of Providence be thus always stretched out against the foes of freedom.

If Spain should join in the war, of which there seems the greatest probability; England must submit or expose herself to almost certain ruin.

I am dear sir your most affect and obedient Servant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following interesting memorandum respecting Arthur Lee in Richard Henry Lee's handwriting is in the Lenox Library, Samuel Adams Papers, 1778-1779, in a context that suggests its date as about April 15, 1779:

“At the time that Mr Adams and R. H. Lee waited on Monsr Gerard the Minister plenipotentiary of France to the United States in order to notify him of the time and place of his audience of Congress after the immediate business of the Committee was over and other conversation being taken up, Mr Adams observed that he was concerned to find it had been reported that Dr Arthur Lee was Antigallican — Since he was known here to have been among the earliest and firmest opposers of G. Britain. On which the Minister replied to this effect. I assure you gentlemen it is not the opinion of the Court of France — that Mr Lee is Antigallican. There have been some idle people who have talked in this manner, and the reason was supposed to be, because Dr Lee was intimate with Count Languois with whom he came frequently to Court — That the Count was a Man of fortune and very talkative, that he was frequently speaking on American subjects, and the proceedings of the Court relative thereto — But as Men of information discovered that in all the Counts conversations he never hit upon the true designs of the Court, so they were satisfied that what he said was, merely the conjectures of his own mind and could not come from Dr Lee, who being well informed, if he had made communications to the Count, his frequent conversation must sometimes have discovered the truth —”



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [DOCTOR] WILLIAM SHIPPEN, JR.<sup>1</sup>

SHIPPEN HALL IN 4<sup>th</sup> STREET PHIL<sup>a</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> April 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

Possession is eleven points of the Law, and there are in this City Profligates enough who for a good fee will secure the twelfth point. Thus you seem to be more at mercy now than when M<sup>rs</sup> — the Tory Doctors wife had residence here. How I came to get possession is another thing, and it may be accounted for this way—On my brother's departure for Virginia last friday I was obliged to decamp from Market street, and it not being easy to find a lodging quickly, my most worthy friend the old Doctor proposed that I should have a room here—The bargain was soon made, I am in your chamber, and we propose to club for our Marketing—The old gentleman drinks nothing but water, & small beer contents me—The Barrack Master furnishes us with wood, and I assure you we live with great happiness and content, whilst we exhibit an example of the truest republican œconomy. After quitting the irksome business of Chestnut Street I have the pleasure of contemplating in my old friend what Man ought to be, but what alas he seldom is—temperate, wise and honest. I am much obliged to you for your favor of the 15<sup>th</sup>, but I do not despair—I am well satisfied however that we

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. This letter and those similarly described are from the collection of Lee and Shippen letters now in the possession of Mrs. Edward Shippen and her son Dr. Lloyd Parker Shippen of Baltimore, and were made accessible by their generous courtesy. Addressed, "William Shippen Jun<sup>r</sup> esquire, Director General of the Hospital of the United States, at Raritan, in/New Jersey." Lee's brother-in-law, see note, *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 166.



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must suffer very considerably before the States in general will feel the necessity of sending wiser and better men to this Assembly. Where a man by being honest is sure to be oppressed—Where disgrace & ruin are to reward the most faithful services. When the discharge of duty raises up the angry and malignant passions of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness—It is best to retire until necessity has pointed out proper men and proper measures. The party seem long since to have abandoned all thoughts of supporting Deane, but they are determined to sacrifice the M<sup>r</sup> Lees & M<sup>r</sup><sup>1</sup> Izard to the Manes of their dear unprincipled friend. The doctrine is, that it is too expensive and not necessary to have any Minister at Vienna or Berlin or Tuscany, and that it will never do to *try* a Man in his absence—Therefore we will damn his reputation with a recal, and let him recover it if he can, in the meantime our Junto will be supplied with places. It is in vain to say that thus to destroy the reputations of Men against whom no shadow of offense appears, and who on the contrary have honestly and ably served the public at every risk to themselves, merely to gratify the wishes and accomplish the views of avaricious and ambitious men, will exhibit such an example as must deter every Man who has character to loose, and means to be honest, from entering into the public service—That so the public business must of necessity be committed to unprincipled Men, and avaricious plunderers—By the aid of a certain *little great whispering* politician this point of sacrifice will I think be carried—Fine reward, excellent encouragement to give up all pro patria—On a late motion to give a million to the Hospital department much violent debate took place

<sup>1</sup> The words “& Mr. Izard” are inserted above the line.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

and it was insisted on that infinite abuses prevailed and demanded immediate enquiry — It was alledged that great quantities of Stores were charged for Geese, ducks, chickens &c &c &c — that the wine was all drank by the well, & not by the sick — All this ended in reducing the sum to 500,000 dollars — The Southern *Chief*, who you know is a most excellent character, said he hoped soon for an enquiry into the conduct of the Director General and all the rest — Therefore a prospect of encountering so great a personage makes it necessary to say Cave quod Agis. The Dutch having lately taken off the prohibition from the exportation of military stores, which they had imposed to oblige Great Britain, clearly proves that the interest of England is waining in Holland — There have arrived 7 Vessels here lately from the West Indies, which has terrified the Specs and lowered the price of sugar £20. in the hundred — It is said that many more Vessels are expected — Trade appears to thicken along the Wharfs and Marine business is recovering its former countenance — I shall go to Virginia in a fortnight where I hope to rest from public toil for some time at least — I think you are with M<sup>r</sup> Blair & his Lady, if so, I pray you to remember me to them, and present my love to my Sister and Cousins.

I am yours sincerely and affectionately —

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA April 24<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

To such uncertain issue are all letters now exposed that are committed to Shipboard, that it absolutely

<sup>1</sup> A. dr. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 299.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

prohibits that<sup>1</sup> full and explicit declaration of ones sentiments on many important points which<sup>2</sup> I shall ever wish to make to you on whose wisdom and goodness I have the firmest reliance. The principals you adopt, and the conduct you intend to pursue, as mentioned in the<sup>3</sup> letter you did me the honor to write me the 5 of August last I do most thoroughly approve. I know well that your support will only be given to the cause of virtue and your country, and that it will never be withheld there from. Who fails in doing right, fails nobly, because Virtue is its own and a very great reward. You will see by the public prints, which Mr. Lovell tells me he has transmitted since the 1<sup>st</sup> of december last, that we are not exempt from the common Lot of humanity. But, tho Deanes and Partners of Deanes may and will shoot up in every Soil, and the foulness about them thicken for a time the purest streams, these will at length work themselves clear and as they run refine. The bold and sudden attempt made by Deanes Libel of Dec. 5<sup>4</sup> on the public mind, seized it for a time with great violence, and hurried it away with too much rapidity for reflection — But no sooner did men begin to think than they began to see, and S. Deane has now fallen under universal contempt and censure — I am sure it has not been this Mans fault if he hath not done more injury to these States than G. Howe ever did — But enough of him — We shall soon transmit our plan for foreign affairs, and in the meantime, we are very impatient to hear from you, not having done so for three months past — We hope Spain will join France<sup>5</sup> which will indeed make

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “such” erased.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “as” erased.

<sup>3</sup> The word “long” is here erased.

<sup>4</sup> The words “by the publication of dec 5” are here erased.

<sup>5</sup> Substituted for “us” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

decisive work — We are preparing for the ensuing Campaign with all possible vigor, but the enemies and our troops yet remain in quarters this way, and it seems probable that the former will be glad to continue so all the Summer as they have not more than 10 or 12,000 men both in York and Rhode Island — which force, if collected, would not be sufficient to take the field — The enemy have made a successful impression on Georgia this winter, but I consider this in the same light of mere temporary effect, as we have seen all their former operations — Measures are taking to remove them from that State, and tho the Climate wars against us, it will not fight for them.<sup>1</sup> — I see, with you the importance of the Confederation, and I am not without hope that it will, ere long,<sup>2</sup> be completed — All have agreed except Maryland, and that State it is thought will come in at the next meeting of their Assembly, which will be in a few months. The Assembly of Virginia have directed their Delegates to move Congress to fix a day for closing this great Compact between such of the States as have consented,<sup>3</sup> allowing either a given or indefinite time, as to Congress shall seem best, for depending States to become Members — We shall shortly move Congress for this purpose — The Currency is an object of the last importance — Tax we do, and very largely indeed, but this is still inadequate — Some aid, by foreign Loan, is indispensable by way of absorbing the immensity of the Mass. — Two<sup>4</sup> Millions of pounds Sterling applied, this way would, with the aid of Taxes, so restore us As to put the remainder of

<sup>1</sup> The words “in their favor” are here erased.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “presently” erased.

<sup>3</sup> The words “leaving a short but” are here erased.

<sup>4</sup> An illegible word is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

our Money on a good foundation, and then, Taxation with oeconomy will do the rest —<sup>1</sup>

Lately our Coasts have been pretty free from the enemies Cruisers — They have now an ample call for their Sea force in other ports, and at present our frigates<sup>2</sup> preserve our trade from the interruption it met with by the numerous small Privateers of the enemy.

Be pleased to accept a pamphlet that accompanies this containing a special collection from our Journals made to counteract certain false and ill designed assertions of the British Commissioners lately here —<sup>3</sup>

I am, yours dear sir with the most affectionate esteem and regard.

direct your letters for me to the care  
of Dr. Shippen in Philadelphia —

TO FRANCIS LIGHT[FOOT] LEE<sup>4</sup>

PHILA. April 26— 1779

MY DEAR BROTHER

I sincerely condole with you for the loss of your Amiable and worthy friend, Col! Tayloe but he is happy, far happier than those he has left upon this

<sup>1</sup> The following sentences introducing a new paragraph are here erased: “After all the vain glorious boasting of our enemies, they find no chance for making a lasting impression either on the Eastern or Middle States. The feeble Georgia is now the only object of the mighty Valor of our foes, nor do I believe they will long succeed even there —”

<sup>2</sup> The words “sail triumphant on along that Coast to the keep” are here erased.

<sup>3</sup> The words “My respects to all good men” following this, and beginning a new paragraph, are erased.

<sup>4</sup> A. L. S. Harvard University Library, Lee Mss., VI. 52. Of Manokin.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

turbulent wicked stage — The enclosed paper will shew you the fortunate success of our little fleet from Boston. The marine enemies stare and are ashamed of their purblind policy which has so often condemned exertions in this way. We go slowly on in Foreign affairs — It has however been resolved not to recall D<sup>r</sup> Franklin, and so far the party have failed, because the plan was to recall them all to make room — This day I have heard all the artillery discharged with great vehemence against D<sup>r</sup> Lee, and prodigious aid is derived from the whispers of G—— d.<sup>1</sup> A doctrine quite new in the history of politics is broached now, which is, that it becomes the dignity, and consists with the interests of Sovereign powers to consult foreign Courts, and less than that, foreign Ministers, who the first shall send to represent them abroad. And this, altho' such resident Minister shall clearly and unequivocally engage in faction, and party doings, to support a Man whose conduct is unsupportable. What will such things lead to in the end? I see nothing but disgrace, contempt, and ruin. Perhaps the man whose understanding, zeal, and spirit, prevented the 12<sup>th</sup> article from being closed upon this Country may have been on that account not quite so agreeable, but surely *we* have no cause to complain of him — and to this may be added, that an host of plunderers have been disconcerted in the Mercantile way, which has raised a prodigious cry — But this Great evidence has given it from under his hand that the Court of France did not adopt the Sentiments of those who represented D<sup>r</sup> Lee as antigallican or favoring England and being averse to the Alliance — M<sup>r</sup> Laurence said in Congress, the whole convinced him that D<sup>r</sup> Lee was an honest, faithful, able & diligent Servant of the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Gerard, minister of France.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

How these affairs will end I know not, but this I do know, that I am quite tired of the wickedness and folly of such part of the world as I have lately had an opportunity of considering, and wish for a few days to pass over when I may retire — Things are not worse to the Southward, but they are not very pleasing — I think our State has not exerted itself properly for the relief of its oppressed and endangered Sisters — The enemy have lately sent 9 more regiments from N. Yorke, but whether for Georgia or the W. Indies is uncertain — They are weak now in this quarter.

My love to M<sup>rs</sup> Lee, and remember me to D<sup>r</sup> Jones and M<sup>r</sup> Gibberne<sup>1</sup> — I would not change an hour of the sensible conversation of the former and the facetiousness of the latter for an age of Congress wisdom —

I should have written by this post to our friend M<sup>r</sup> Page of Mannsfield, but I suppose he is with you. Salute him for me — Adieu.

Give my love to M<sup>r</sup> Parker and tell him that I am so oppressed with business that it is impossible for me to write to him now. Thank him for his favor of the 13<sup>th</sup>

1800 barrels of Flour	} Cargoes of the 7 prizes .
2000 d <sup>o</sup> of Beef & Pork	
£120,000 Sterlings worth of Beef & Pork	

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Isaac W. Giberne.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMIES  
OF THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup>

(GENERAL [GEORGE] WASHINGTON)

PHILADELPHIA April 28<sup>h</sup> 1779

SIR,

The inclosed letter from the Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina, committed by Congress to the consideration of a committee of three, and which, in the name of the committee<sup>2</sup> I have now the honor to inclose your Excellency, will shew you the extremity to which our affairs in that quarter are driving. The Committee find a choice of difficulties in this business, because the reliance on Militia from Virginia having in great degree failed, there appears no remedy but such as will lessen the force you had a right to expect from Virginia for reenforcing the main army. We have no reason to suppose that a greater force than 1400 militia, perhaps not more than 1000 will go from North Carolina, and of the 1000 ordered by the government of Virginia, we learn that not more than 350 have been obtained. In this state of things, the Committee submit to your Excellencies wisdom, and better

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, XXXII. 86. Addressed, "On public business//His Excellency/General Washington,/Commander in chief of the/Armies of the United States, at/Head Quarters in/New Jersey// R. H. Lee." Endorsed, "from Rich : H. Lee/on Southern affairs/ans<sup>d</sup> 30"

<sup>2</sup> Lee alone signs the letter. Lee, Thomas Burke, and Henry Laurens were the committee chosen in Congress, April 26, 1779, to consider a letter of the 5th of April from T. Bee, the Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina, and on the 7th of May the Committee brought in a report chiefly in the writing of Richard Henry Lee, which is in the Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 20, II, folio 361, and printed in W. C. Ford, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, XIV. 559-561.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

knowledge of military affairs and intended operations, the following measures.

That the 2000 new Recruits now in Virginia be forthwith regimented and ordered to join the Southern Army. That a sum of money be sent to Col<sup>o</sup> Bland, with orders to reinlist the men of his regiment, and proceed without delay to the same destination. If Sir, this plan should meet your approbation, the Committee are of opinion that the sooner it were carried into execution the better.

Your Excellency will be pleased to return the inclosed letter, and the Committee wish to be favored with your opinion of the eligibility of this measure, and if there is a probability of its being soon executed; or what additional or other method may occur to your Excellency for relief of the southern States, which we find by conversing with General Howe (who is just arrived here) demands speedy and powerful assistance.

I have the honor to be, with the highest sentiments of esteem and regard, Sir your Excellencies most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA May the 3<sup>d</sup> 1779

DEAR SIR,

Always attentive to your commands, I have obtained here, and now inclose you the song and the receipt you desired. I once had both of them at home, but they are mislaid among a mass of papers, so that I could find neither previous to my leaving Chantilly, or your request would then have been complied with. I hope

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 25. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 44.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

you have received the pamphlet I sent you some weeks ago entitled "Obsevation on the American revolution" containing a collection of the most material congress papers with a few remarks interspersed, in order to shew in one comprehensive view the progress of our glorious revolution, and to rectify some false representations of the British Commissioners. This pamphlet was sent by an Express that came here from M<sup>r</sup> Harvey and returned to Williamsburgh, with intention to follow M<sup>r</sup> Harvey to Albemarle if he found him not at the former of these places. I wish it were in my power to [e]ntertain you with news, but we are here as void of that as if [p]rofound peace reigned thro'out the world. We have not heard from Europe for four months, and altho there then seemed a disposition in many Powers to restore the general tranquility, yet all [w]ere industriously preparing for war, and some being actually [e]ngaged, the fate of millions hung in doubtful ballance.

The armies here continue quiet within their quarters. That of the enemy, by their late embarkation of nine regiments, rendered too weak for taking the field, must content itself with holding N. York as the Gibraltar of N. America. If we can baffle the Southern invasion, it is clear to me that the game will be presently up with our enemies, and that they will be compelled by inevitable necessity to be content with the loss of thirteen flourishing states. A very fit consequence of the foolish and wicked attempt to reduce to slavery so many free, useful, and affectionate friends. I hope that when you and my other friends consider all things, that you will not blame me for sending my resignation to the Assembly. I am really injured in my health by such continued, close application; and a long neglected numerous family demands some attention. Add to these, that persecuted as I have been by the united voice of

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

toryism, speculation, faction, envy, mali[ce,] and all uncharitableness, nothing but the certain prospect of doing essential service to my country can compensate for the injuries I receive. It would content me indeed to sacrifice every consideration to the public good that would result from such persons as yourself M<sup>r</sup> Wythe, M<sup>r</sup> Mason and some others being in Congress. I would with persevering ardor press thro every difficulty in conjunction with such Associates. I am informed that Col<sup>o</sup> Blackburn intends to propose a bi[[ll]] this Session for the relief of Landlords—I should suppose that the wisdom and justice of the Legislature can and will devise some remedy for the relief of this class of people among us. I am one, who have the misfortune to se[e] myself and family nearly ruined by the retrospective effect of our law. Almost the whole of my landed estate was rented out some years before th[e] war for low cash rents, and under the faith of existing law which secured me Specie for my rents. The vast sums of paper money that have been issued (& this being now a legal tender for the discharge of rents growing from old contracts) and the consequent depreciation, has well nigh effected an entire transfer of my estate to my Tenants. This year Sir, the rents of 4000 acres of fine Land will not buy me 20 barrels of Corn! I am very far from desiring that the law should place these contracts literally as they were, but substantially so, it is [&? s]eems just that they should be. When the Tenant agreed to pay me £6. for an hund. acres rent, he could not sell his Tob<sup>o</sup> for more than 16 or 18 shillings an hundred—Now he sells his Tob<sup>o</sup> for £10 & 12 p<sup>t</sup> Cent. It does not appear to me that the public good can be concerned in thus transferring the property of Landlords to their Tenants—But public justice demands that the true meaning, and genuine spirit of contracts should be complied with. It appears to me



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that an Act of Commutation might set this business right by directing the payment in produce at the prevailing price of such produce when the Contracts were made, leaving this to be settled by the Courts annually as they formerly did in the case of exchange. I well know your love of justice to be such that your approbation will be given to any proper plan for doing right in the premises. For my own part, I am willing to suffer every thing rather than injure the public cause, but in the present state of things I can see no possibility of public injury from thus rendering private justice.

I am with much esteem and regard dear Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA May 22. 1779

DEAR SIR,

I have paid due attention to your favor of April the 21<sup>st</sup>, and I believe there would have been no difficulty in obtaining what is desired for Baron de Geismar had not the enemy created the difficulties that do exist. They absolutely refuse to admit partial [e]xchanges, and they have lately proposed such unfair [ter]ms for general exchange, that nothing can be done in either of these ways. They will not allow one of our Officers to come out on parole, if like permission be granted to one of theirs, as appeared in the case of Major de Passeren [o]f the Regiment of Hesse Hanau. Upon consideration of this matter with your friend M<sup>r</sup> Peters, who is one of the Board of War, we con-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 26. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 46.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

clude the way to put this matter [i]nto the best train will be for the Baron to apply to the British Commander in Chief for this parole exchange, [a]nd write to Gen. Knephausen to support the request— That these letters be sent here to the Board of War, and they will will immediately forward them thro the Commissary of Prisoners expressing their willingness to gratify the Baron. An objection is raised here to gratifying this Officer without receiving something like an equivalent from the enemy, as tending to encourage their obstinacy in refusing a general exchange on terms of fair equality, by which our captive Officers? . . .<sup>1</sup>

We have no news here but what comes from Virginia, — All good men are waiting with anxious expectation to hear that our Countrymen have given these wicked Invaders cause to repent of their undertaking.

We have been told that Col<sup>o</sup> Hamilton of Detroit is ou[r] prisoner, made so by the brave Col<sup>o</sup> Clarke — I wish it may be true, and I hope the<sup>2</sup> Prisoner will be well secured, because his enmity to us, his activity, and influence among the Indians, are equal and all very great — My respects to M<sup>r</sup> Wythe and my other friends.

I am dear Sir yours sincerely.

<sup>1</sup> There is a manifest omission in the manuscript here.

<sup>2</sup> Two illegible erasures, one above the other, occur here.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

CHESTER 8 oclock Thursday Ev<sup>g</sup> [May 27, 1779]

MY DEAR SIR,

On my way here I met with M<sup>r</sup> Serjeant, of whom I enquired touching the proof he had mentioned of Deanes having communicated the intended Treaty to Wharton in London some days before its conclusion — The Witness is, it seems, Surgeon to Proctors Regiment, now on its way to Pittsburg — This man was the Bearer of the letters to Wharton, and his evidence is I think very conclusive — I assure you Sir I am in this case not influenced in the least by motives of personal resentment, the thorough conviction I have of the public good that will result from fixing on M<sup>r</sup> Deane the guilt that I am satisfied he has practiced influences me solely. It is impossible that justice can be done, either to the Community, or to Individuals, unless this man be properly understood. And certainly nothing more is necessary to accomplish this than to proceed with serious determination to the enquiry and collect the evidence written and oral that this Country abundantly furnishes. The establishment of his criminality will at once prevent him from imposing on the public to its future injury, and do justice to the characters he has traduced by charging them with crimes committed by himself. This evidence may easily be had from Pittsburg, S<sup>r</sup> James Jay & Cap<sup>t</sup> Nicholson are in Philadelphia M<sup>r</sup> Diggs will attend when called on — These, with the papers you have, shew enormity sufficient to place

<sup>1</sup> Transcript, Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 2. Addressed to him "in Chestnut Street near the /State House/ Philadelphia." Endorsed as received May 29 and answered June 1.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

M<sup>r</sup> Deane in the light he ought to be seen i[n]<sup>1</sup> I should not have troubled you Sir with s[o]<sup>1</sup> long a letter on so foul a subject, if I were not perfectly satisfied of your attachment to the cause of justice and general good, your dislike of public defaulters and your desire to protect and defend the virtuous servants of the United States — I understand by M<sup>r</sup> Sergeant that M<sup>r</sup> Secretary Thomson has been long acquainted with D<sup>r</sup> Kendals evidence, and having concealed it, and acted the part he has done, renders him as unfit to be the Secretary of Congress, as any other W—h—e in Philadelphia. I shall continue to entertain the very agreeable hopes of being honored with your Company in your way Southward. Your route is thro Baltimore, cross Potomac at Hoës, and from M<sup>r</sup> Hoe you will get exact direction to my house:

I am, with most affectionate esteem dear Sir your most obedient and obliged servant.

P.S.

My friend Col<sup>o</sup> Scudder will exert himself in getting this evidence to prove the perfidy of our self applauding, discarded, wishing to be Minister —

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY June the 6th 1779

MY DEAR FRIEND

There seems to be something ungenerous in wishing you may continue in a situati[o]n where I well know that your fine patriotic (I [do?]<sup>1</sup> nt say feelings because Penn has vulgarized [the wor]<sup>1</sup>d) sense receives re-

<sup>1</sup> Hole in the Ms.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. Addressed to Adams, "Member of Congress at/Philadelphia."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

peated wounds from the —— and the —— of many of<sup>1</sup> those you are confined to converse and to do business with. Yet I am not unreasonable. If I had to *draw* with such as you have, I would encounter the rest with all imaginable patience and vigor. But too much has been done; and with too much pains, risk, and perseverance, to let the whole be lost by a few *Spoilers*. The author of this Revolution will not suffer the good it was intended to produce to be lost for the wickedness of a few individuals—I trust therefore, that sufficient influence will operate on good men, to have enough always collected to stem the torrent of wickedness and perversity. Should the news prevailing here of Gen. Lincolns having entirely defeated the enemy prove true, we may hope, as this was done by our own countrymen, that our full share in the fishery and the navigation of Mississippi may yet be obtained notwithstanding the *excellent* and *honorable expositions* that our really excellent friend M<sup>r</sup> Lovell furnished us with a translation of, dated A Philadelphie le 22 May 1779. It is very amusing to see a Man undertake to condemn, what he supposes, a partial and unfair explanation of Treaty, and proceed to give one himself that is infinitely m<sup>ore</sup> scholastic than generous, more labored [than]<sup>2</sup> just. However I hope our good Ally entertains no such sentiments, as will lead to yieldings by which our future safety, strength, and prosperity will be put on<sup>3</sup> doubtful ground. The enemy have plundered and left us—If tempted thereby to come again, I hope their fortune will be less, and their punishment greater. Our Assembly have chosen Jefferson Governor, this augurs wisdom in the new Delegates, and promises a good choice of their other Servants—I

<sup>1</sup> The words “many of” are inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. damaged.

<sup>3</sup> The word “such” is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

hope it will prove so. America may have wise and honest Counsellors, and having such, they would not be treated like children as now they are. I shall be happy to hear from you, and well pleased indeed to know that wisdom and diligence guided Congress—My best respects to the patriotic Inhabitants of Liberty Hall, and to my esteemed friends Gen. Whipple, M<sup>r</sup> Sherman, Gen. Spencer & M<sup>r</sup> Ellery—I am, and shall be whilst I live your friend.

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA June 6<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

Our news here is most excellent; both from Williamsburg and from Richmond it comes, that our countrymen have given the enemy in the South a complete overthrow, killed many and taken many prisoners, with the cannon, stores, baggage & wag-gons of their army—One of my letters says, it is expected the whole will be made prisoners. This, if true, will be the more glorious as we shall have done it ourselves, and on that account more productive of useful consequences. Heaven grant it may be so, I shall then, with infinite pleasure congratulate my friend on the recovery of his property, and our common country on so great a step towards *really* putting a period to the war. I think that in this case we<sup>2</sup> may insist on our full share of the Fishery, and the free navigation of the Mississippi. These are things of very great and lasting importance to America, the

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Written over other letters.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

yielding of which will not procure the Congress thanks either from the present age or posterity. Yet it appears to me that Congress will suffer themselves to be *wriggled* (for I can hardly call it by so rough a name as *jostling*) out of both these momentous *rights*. Rights say the other side of the House, we deny that &c. — Softly gentlemen, I have had so many sickening doses of your jargon on this subject, that I do not mean to interrupt my present happy state by suffering such nauseous intrusion — Nature and reason have given us both, no Attorneys quirks can shake titles derived from such sources. I arrived here in five days from Philadelphia, where I learned that the enemy had quitted this State with a good deal of plunder on the 26<sup>th</sup> of may. I wish this had been known to me before I left Philadelphia. — I should certainly have remained to see the foreign business finished — However, after all that has happened I cannot help yet hoping, that a majority will be found among the representatives of young Republics who will support able and honest servants, whilst they properly censure and discountenance the knavish abusers of public trust. Methinks our Congress should direct to be written in large characters and placed in the most visible part of their Session Hall the following just sentiment of the excellent Montesquieu “There is no great share of probity necessary to support a Monarchical or Despotic government. The force of laws in<sup>1</sup> one, and the Princes arm in the other, are sufficient to direct and maintain the whole. But in a popular state, one spring more is *necessary*, namely *Virtue*.” If he had added Vigilance his fabric would have been complete. I know there are Mandevilles among you who laugh at virtue, and with vain

<sup>1</sup> The word “the” is here erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ostentatious display of words will deduce from vice, public good! But such men are much fitter to be Slaves in the corrupt, rotten despotisms of Europe, than to remain citizens of young and rising republics. The Committee of Philadelphia have my free consent to send all such within the enemies lines. I think this useful Committee would have no difficulty in saying with certainty Thou, & Thou, & Thou, & Thou, & Thou, & Thou, & Thou art the man. Tho not perfectly pure after this<sup>1</sup> selection, such a Load would be removed, that a young and vigorous constitution might soon work itself clean and perfect health take place.

I contemplate with much satisfaction the time when our Cottage shall be honored with your company, and if you can enable me to judge when you will be at Hooes ferry on Potomac, I would send a Guide there to shew the way to this place. You have been so extremely kind in furnishing me with copies of many papers, that I know not how to request a copy of M<sup>r</sup> Deanes letter of december the 1<sup>st</sup> 1777 wherein he writes “Not *ostensibly* to the Court but to a private company” And a copy of R. Morris’s letter suggesting Deanes partnership with Williams. I observe that frequent mention is made of Deanes agreement with Beaumerchais—If any such was made, surely it is in writing and ought to be produced. I should be very glad to have a copy. Or is this an ideal thing that we are insulted with so frequently, as indeed we have been by many other visions, such as with [“] *M<sup>r</sup> Deanes great services and virtuous transaction of the public affairs committed to him* — M<sup>r</sup> Holkers *disinterested* furnishing of cloaths — M<sup>r</sup> Monthieus ‘*better cloaths no army ever wore*’ — M<sup>r</sup> Williams’s *able*

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “such” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

*services for the public,"* evidenced by his sending Car-goes without Invoices, and Chartered Ships without copy of the Charter party or a word explanatory of the contract made for the Ship! These numerous instances of audaciously attempting to make vice virtue proves, either a very bad opinion of Congress, or the very bad composition of those who practise such things. I shall be much obliged to you Sir if you will find some opportunity of getting the papers read in Congress that shew the wicked attempt to destroy the reputation of M<sup>r</sup> Schweighausers house by Chaumont and his friend at Nantes. Nor shall I be less thankful for your obtaining a report and conclusion upon the papers I had the honor to send you from hence last december on the subject of Penns purchase of Tob<sup>o</sup> in this State under Braxtons direction. I remember well the kind promise you made to favor me now and then with a letter and with the news, as well as the determinations relative to our foreign affairs. There are three houses on your way from Philadelphia here, the Masters of which are my friends, and where yourself, your people, and horses will be kindly and hospitably entertained — M<sup>r</sup> Jacob Giles just on this side Susquehannah ferry — M<sup>r</sup> Stephen West about 5 miles on this side Upper Marlborough in Maryland, and the honorable Richard Lee esq<sup>r</sup> near Hooes ferry on the north side of Potomac. I mention these, because the public houses afford very indifferent entertainment for Man or horse. I am, with very great esteem and affection, dear Sir yours most sincerely.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GEORGE MASON]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, June 9th, 1779.

DEAR SIR :

I am much obliged to you for your favor of the 4th, but greatly concerned for your state of health. The force of party and the power of fortune it seems to me, are leagued to distress if not to ruin America. There never was a time when the fullest exertion of ability and integrity was more necessary to rescue us from impending ills. The inundation of money appears to have overflowed virtue, and I fear will bury the liberty of America in the same grave. Believe me, Sir, it is not from improper despondence that I think in this manner. Look around you, do you anywhere see wisdom and integrity, and industry prevail either in council or execution? The demon of avarice, extortion, and fortune-making seizes all ranks. And now, to get into office is another thing for getting into wealth on public funds and to the public injury. I well know that much of this will in all countries take place in time of war, but in America, unfortunately at this time, nothing else is attended to. And such is the state of things, so unequally is this mass of money distributed, that I assure you my apprehensions are great that this heavy tax will come with crushing weight on great numbers of honest, industrious men, whilst a number of others who have amassed thousands by illicit means will not feel the burthen. I hope some method will be fallen on to make the tax touch the speculators, monopolists, and those people concerned in staff departments of commissary, quartermaster, &c., &c. who have acquired vast wealth on very pernicious principles. In choosing

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in Kate Mason Rowland, *Life and Correspondence of George Mason*, I. 330.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the executive officers of government, integrity, ability, and industry must be attended to, or we are inevitably ruined. The millions we issue are with such profusion wasted, that they produce only heavy taxes without good to the community. This I apprehend arises from want of wisdom, diligence, or integrity somewhere. In truth there is so little attention paid to the expenditure of the public money, and the public accounts are so irregularly settled, or rather not settled at all, that it affords opportunities and gives temptation to men not truly moral to venture on bad practises in hopes of impunity. To me it appears of indispensable necessity that instructions be given to your delegates in Congress in terms peremptory and express that they move Congress, and never cease to urge it, that the most immediate and effectual settlement be made of all public accounts, calling to strict account all those who have been entrusted with public money, admitting not of evasive and dilatory pleas. That they have ready to lay before the Assembly, at its next meeting their proceedings herein, and if it is not done, the reasons why. I mean this latter part, in order to prevent those kind of put offs and go byes which I have seen so very often practised.

There is another point on which I think instructions greatly necessary, because I apprehend abuse has already taken place to considerable extent, and may, if not prevented, go much further. It is to prevent the practise of delegates from any State, and more particularly one delegate from any State, from obtaining from Congress money on the credit of the State he or they come from without the orders of that particular State. In time, when death or bankruptcy shall have removed delegates or incapacitated them, these grants may be refused by the States, or some of them, and public discord and confusion be the result. This practise



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

began originally upon the necessity members were under of getting money due to them for wages to support their necessary expenses, and so far as that, strictly confined there, nothing ill would have resulted. But I have reason to think it has been carried much further. Your treasurer should be ordered to remit the wages of the delegates in due season, and the practise of taking money from the Continental treasury without express order be totally inhibited. If necessity compelled, why, then, there was no resisting the measure, but it does seem strange, that when the quantity of money in circulation has almost stopped its currency and introduced universal corruption of manners, which both obliged the laying of a most weighty tax, that our Assembly should order a million of pounds to be emitted. I greatly fear the effect of this, as well in reality, as from the operation it will have on the apprehensions of men in the other States!

It is, I think, to be feared, that the enemy's late success in this State will encourage other visits, and behooves us both in the deliberative and executive departments, to be as well prepared in every respect as possible to prevent the like success on their part and injury on ours. The first thing is to remove temptation by never suffering stores of any kind to be collected in considerable quantities near where troops may be landed from vessels protected by ships of war. Where the enemy want provisions and wish to destroy our means of defence, surely magazines of provisions and of warlike stores ought to be places the most secure. It appears to me that expensive fortifications are not the thing. Mere batteries to protect vessels against small sea force is all of this kind that can for the present be attempted with propriety and success. Extreme mismanagement has, I suppose, alienated our minds from our true, just and natural defence by vessels of



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

war. I think it may be demonstrated that eight gallies on our part and six on that of Maryland, well-manned, fitted and commanded, carrying thirty-two and twenty-four pounders, and constructed as were the Congress gallies built at Philadelphia, would with ease baffle the attempts of such a force as came here last. This is a kind of movable battery which proceeding with the enemy would disappoint them, whilst forts on land will be avoided when the foe is weak and always fall when they are strong. And these forts, under the idea of strength delude men to make collections which they otherwise would not, and which tempt an enemy to come for plunder where they would not otherwise visit.

On the subject of public accounts and public expenses, Dr. Lee in a late letter to Congress: "Indeed there has been hitherto such licentiousness suffered in the conduct of our affairs, that these gentlemen [meaning Ross, Williams, &c., &c., &c.] seem to think it both an affront and injustice to be called upon for a clear and unequivocal account of the expenditure of the public money. It seems clear to me that if all the millions expended are thus accounted for, the *burthens* and *poverty* of the *public* will increase with the *opulence* of *individuals*, and soon become intolerable." This is a melancholy truth. Squire Lee will show you a copy of a letter to this very Ross, whom Braxton writes so prettily about, from the commissioners by which you may judge how he is going on. This man has had more than 400,000 livres of France advanced him by Deane, besides remittances from America. He is one of the commercial league on public funds.

As this is a safe opportunity, I enclose you the State papers you desired me to get, and at your leisure be pleased to let me have a copy as I have not had time to make one. I rejoice greatly at the news from South

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Carolina. God grant it may be true. If this should force the enemy to reason and to peace, would you give up the navigation of the Mississippi and our domestic fishery on the banks of Newfoundland? The former almost infinitely depreciating our back country and the latter totally destroying us as a maritime power. That is taking the name of independence without the means of supporting it. If you have any news and time to write it I pray you to do so, and excuse this long trespass on your patience and your business.

I am most affectionately yours,

TO [GENERAL THOMAS MIFFLIN?]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY June 13. 1779

DEAR SIR,

I think Fiddle has played a fine tune in Dunlaps paper of May the 29<sup>th</sup>—If you wish to know what Fiddle, whether a Cremona, a Steyner, or a *Base* viol, or the Head of a *Base* Viol, ask our friend Ellery and he will explain the mystery. Some people rather than not be remarkable would be so for being supremely ridiculous—So, that rather than it should not be known that Fiddle sometimes plays in Congress a first Fiddle, the yeas and nays must be published in Dunlaps paper on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, [tha]t all the world may be set to laughing—at whom—not at M<sup>r</sup> Laurens—But, a jocus ad seria—Have you rescued the fishery from the paws that are used to pull the Chesnuts out of the fire—It is mighty convenient, when a person does not choose to burn his own fingers, to have ready an offi-

<sup>1</sup> A. dr. L. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 309. Endorsed in autograph “Letter about / Fiddle / alias Merryw<sup>r</sup> Smith / to Gen Mifflin” [?].

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

cious hand, willing to encounter the embers. I think that as the house *near* the *Capitol* is *less* than the *Capitol*, that the *Lesser* ought not to dictate to the *Larger*, and more especially as the "Alliance not being victorious cannot give law to the common enemy" . . . M<sup>r</sup> Ellery's sagacity can help to explain this last enigma if you should find any difficulty with the thing yourself —

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRG.<sup>a</sup> June the 13<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

Accept my thanks for your obliging favor of the third instant with the inclosures mentioned therein which I duly received on the 9<sup>th</sup>, three days after I had dispatched to the Post a letter for you dated the 6<sup>th</sup> of this month. Living thirteen miles from the line of post, and being obliged to send one day *for* my letters and four days afterwards *with* my letters, it is not in my power to reply to my friends by the return of the post that brings me their favors.

We wait with great impatience for confirmation of the southern news, which has come to us by such various ways, and corresponding so well with the last authentic accounts of the situation of the enemy and of our Troops, that most people here credit the account of the former being defeated. M<sup>r</sup> Smith (alias Dogberry) has been famous here for being a very vain and a very troublesome man — But his vanity, for certain reasons, has been so powerfully fed at Philadelphia, that it hath eaten him up — I can no otherways account for the publication of the yeas and nays in

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 4.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Dunlaps paper of the 29<sup>th</sup>, w<sup>ch</sup> I presume will set all the world to laughing at him as they do here — Perhaps, like the “Aspiring youth who fired the Ephesian Dome,” he means to establish his fame upon the reverse of right. So that his monument may be, not for building but for destroying Temples. It has been very obvious to me for some months past that Deane and his party were planning a second publication, or why those repeated letters to Congress boldly demanding trial when he knew the public business and his faction were ready to prevent it? But there is so much rottenness at the bottom and in every part of their System, that no stratagem, or combination of stratagems, can sustain the putrid fabric — It must be dissolved by the judicious probings of honest whiggism. I therefore wish that M<sup>r</sup> Deane were brought to an open door, full and thorough examination into his political and commercial conduct. For, though commerce be an employment in itself honorable and useful, yet the trading on public funds, making the public interest bend before private views, and endeavoring to cover all this with the veil of mystery, and by recrimination to turn the public attention from and prevent examination into the proper men and proper things, is a conduct highly reprehensible, and being properly exposed to public view, would presently bring to punishment and to contempt, the authors and abettors of such nefarious proceeding. It has happened as I imagined, that I should be called upon about the letters I inclosed you concerning the misconduct of a M<sup>r</sup> Penn employed by M<sup>r</sup> Braxton to purchase Tob<sup>o</sup> for the Continent in this State. I have received a letter since my return, from a Member of our Assembly, desiring to know what has been done in the affair. Be so good Sir as press this matter to a conclusion, as well on principles of public good, as

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that my unprincipled enemies may not suggest that I have collusively suppressed enquiry. I hope by this time you will have received good news from Europe — Perhaps Spain, or Prussia, or the Empire, or Holland has declared for our Alliance — It will give me much pleasure to know this, and that our foreign affairs and finance have been finished with tolerable wisdom. The two last I suppose depend much on the pleasure of the *Table* — It will be well for these people if the curse of David does not at length overtake them “Let their *Table* be made a snare to take *themselves* withal: and let the things that should have been for their wealth, be unto them an occasion of falling” — I have the honor to be with great respect and esteem dear Sir your much obliged and most obedient servant,

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY June 18<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I have not yet been able to send to the Post Office and therefore know not whether I am honored with a letter from you<sup>2</sup> or not by the last Post. A late landing of the enemy in the county next below us obliged me to lead the Militia to prevent them from burning our Warehouses as they did those of Northumberland with between two and three hundred hogsheads of Tobacco in them. They have 10 Vessels, two of 30 guns and the rest small, from some of which they landed 60 men where no force was collected to oppose them, burned the Warehouses and three private houses,

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 5. Addressed, “Honorable Henry Laurens/of the Congress/Philadelphia.” Endorsed, “Rec<sup>d</sup> 28<sup>th</sup>” [June] “Ans<sup>d</sup> 16 July.”

<sup>2</sup> Ms. blotted.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

carrying of[f] several negroes with them — They disappeared on hearing that the Militia of Northumberland was preparing to attack them. Our news from the Southward is not yet confirmed, but the victory over the enemy comes so many ways that it is universally credited here. The inclosed scrap of a Newspaper will give you the last account from Williamsburg on this subject. I understand that our present invaders are a collection of Tories from New York, combined for the purpose of plunder and revenge. Fine Agents of George the third! — I am, with the most sincere esteem and respect, my dear Sir your most obliged and affectionate friend.

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY June 18<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR FRIEND.

I am this moment returned from an expedition with our militia to prevent the further ravage of a sett of Tory miscreants from New York who have clubbed their force for the purpose of plunder and revenge — Most excellent agents of George the third! They landed 60 men where there was no force collected to oppose them, and burnt the Warehouses on Wicomico river with between two and three hundred hogsheads of Tobacco, and three private houses, carrying off a Gentleman from one of them with several Slaves from the neighborhood. Finding the Militia were assembling they embarked and disappeared declaring their purpose was<sup>2</sup> to burn every Warehouse on Potomac

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. Addressed to him as "Member of Congress / Philadelphia."

<sup>2</sup> The two words preceding are substituted for "intention" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

river. This discovery of their intention will I expect defeat their design. Our accounts, which are pretty good, make the number of their vessels ten, eight of them small, and the others of 30 guns each. These wretches have it in their power to create us great expence and much trouble, pierced as we are in every part with waters deep and broad, without marine force sufficient to oppose even this contemptible collection of Pirates. We are compelled to such frequent calls upon the Militia as to injure greatly the agriculture of the country without effectually answering the purpose of defence, because these freebooters fly quickly with their canvas wings from one undefended place to another, burn what they find and retire before a force can be collected to chastise them. Two frigates joined with our small Vesels of war could destroy this whole collection of Banditti, and relieve us from much charge and inconvenience. If the Marine committee could order such a force into Chesapeake Bay it would greatly serve us, and punish a most abominable and unprincipled sett of Buccaneers. By their having taken off three of our best Bay and river pilots it appears that they design to stay some time and to endeavor the execution of their Warehouse burning plan. I had hoped to have heard from you by the last post, but the necessity of leading the Militia out on the late alarm has prevented me, 'till now, from sending to the Post Office. We have not a confirmation of the good news from Charles Town yet, but the account of Gen. Lincolns victory comes so many ways that it gains universal credit here. My best respects attend my honorable Whig acquaintances in Congress. I am my dear Sir most affectionately yours.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR FRIEND

VIRGINIA June 19<sup>th</sup> 1779

Since writing to you yesterday we have had the opportunity of examining a Man that left the enemy whilst they were burning our Warehouses. He is an Eastern Man, was captured sometime ago and detained. He says, the Vessels now in our Bay consist of the Otter 18 guns, the Harlem 12 guns, both Kings Vessels, the Dunmore 16, Hammond Schooner 14, Lord North 12, Fincastle 2, three pounders. The 4 last, are Gutridges fleet — Besides the Warehouses, they plundered and burned five private houses — They have about 80 Men that they use as Marines, and with these they land at unguarded places, plunder & destroy.

Were the Confederacy disengaged, she alone would demolish this whole band of pirates.

If the Boston is recovered, she, with the Dean, can in a fortnight capture all these Vessels and relieve the numerous water settlements on Chesapeak and its dependencies. Our Militia cannot be everywhere, and where they are not, these plunderers land and destroy. I recollect, that some weeks ago, the Merchants of Philadelphia offered to assist in getting men for the Continental Ships, in order to clear the Bay of Chsapeak of obstructions to their commerce — The present enemy may be removed without much difficulty, and whilst they continue in our Bay, they obstruct the trade as effectually as the largest ships could do. If the Marine Committee can relieve us I am sure it will be done.

May heaven preserve you in health and happiness.

Your friend.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. Addressed to him as "Member of Congress /Philadelphia."

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA, June 20, 1779

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I well know that your engagement with the pub. business will not permit you to write to me so frequently as I wish to hear from you, or as my leisure permits me to write to you. This will be the third letter from me to you by this post, and this is intended chiefly to cover the copy of a letter received yesterday from my bro<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee — Tho it is of an old date, it contains many things worthy of observation — and you will make such use of it as your wisdom may suggest for the public good. I do not think the writer would have been so incredulous if he had been in C—ss<sup>2</sup> eight or ten months last past — Why has every art been used to delay the most essential of our foreign & domestic business — Why such strong efforts to embroil us with the State of Pennsylvania — Why has no answer been sent to the long since propounded question concerning Spain which D<sup>r</sup> Lee sent in August 78 and which Congress has been in possession of more than 6 months — Why has not the proposed Treaty with Holland, a copy of which has been so long sent & on the files of Congress been considered and determined on — Why such industry used to render odious, and drive from the pub. Councils the original, uniform, and firm Whiggs and friends to the interest and independence of America — These things have made up my judgment for some time<sup>3</sup> — Yet I hope the virtuous

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. Addressed, "Honorable Samuel Adams esquire/ Member of Congress/ at/ Philadelphia."

<sup>2</sup> Congress.

<sup>3</sup> The three words preceding are substituted for "long since" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

cause of America will prevail against the Devil & all his works. By the Manner in which Dean appears by this letter to have written so long since as to have reached Europe before the 20<sup>th</sup> of december last, we may conclude how long ago it was that the Party had formed that plan which with so much intrigue, assiduity, and wickedness, they have ever since prosecuted — The inclosed scrap of an English November last Newspaper shews the great importance of the American fishery and may afford a clue for explaining the manœuvres used to exclude America therefrom — Strange that we cannot see the wisdom of taking care in the first place of our own most essential rights ! — I am much concerned to hear there are such minatory complaints from the Com. General's & Board of War departments — cannot some of G. Morris's undirected purchase be applied to the former, as a plentiful new harvest is coming in — And the latter I suppose must be remedied with expedients until the lately offered aid in this way can be obtained — But then no time should be lost in transmitting an invoice of our wants —

Farewell my dear friend, and may heaven crown your efforts for the *secure* independence of America<sup>1</sup> with success —

Affectionately yours.

Gutridges Gang are again burning houses and plundering at the mouth of Rappahanock river.

<sup>1</sup> A word is here erased.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

MENOKIN IN VIRGINIA June 20<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I had the honor of writing to you on the 18<sup>th</sup> instant previous to my leaving Chantilly for this my brothers seat. I have here been favored with your obliging letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> with its inclosures, for which I present my best thanks. The letter you send me is from my brother William dated Frankfort December 20<sup>th</sup> 1778, and contains the following paragraphs "The British partizans headed by the P. of O.<sup>2</sup> & aided by British guineas had nearly prevailed to destroy the freedom of the Dutch commerce & overthrow the rights of the Republic, but the firmness of the Regency & Pensionary of Amsterdam supported by the body of the Merchants, at the head of whom was placed Mons<sup>r</sup> Jean de Neufville, has hitherto saved the Republic from the evils it was threatened with; & the patriotic party seems to gather strength. For, on the last question in the general assembly of the States, two other cities & three members of the Nobility voted with Amsterdam, so that by perseverance it is expected the patriotic measures will finally prevail. All which, will be greatly to our advantage — I cannot learn that G. B. has been able to engage any fresh troops from this quarter for the American war. On the contrary, I am assured from all quarters, that she will not be able to procure near the number of recruits necessary to complete the German corps now

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 6. Addressed to him as "Member of Congress / at / Philadelphia." Endorsed, "Recd 28" [June] "Ans<sup>d</sup> 16 July."

<sup>2</sup> Prince of Orange.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

in America. — The designs of the B. Ministry cannot be exactly understood, because their plans are changed so frequently. However, I think they are determined on essaying another campaign to recover America, and that most of their operations will be of the predatory kind & ravaging the back country with the Indians — Be as well prepared as possible for any sudden attempt on the Coast of Virginia, & on Charles Town which from resentment Clinton will wish to destroy — 'Tis my duty to mention, and *you may be assured of the fact*, that L<sup>d</sup> North declared publicly in the house of Commons, that if the Congress had assented to treat on the terms proposed by the British Commissioners, that he would not have confirmed them. After this, what American, in his senses, can listen one moment to any terms whatsoever proposed by the present British Ministry? this should be published thro America, and if it is necessary, you may give me as the author — M<sup>r</sup> Deane has, it seems, written over, that Congress had plans of changing all their appointments in Europe & that he was coming over in a very lucrative employment. I had no doubt but that he and his Coadjutor 6 — would carry on intrigue and trick wherever they were, but my opinion of Congress must be greatly changed from what it is, before I can believe it will be deluded by them. — The English papers tell us of a thousand divisions & distractions in America & even in Congress, not a word of which do I believe, tho' Gov<sup>r</sup> Johnston insists that a great deal of his money was received, which was layed out to produce those effects." —

If the writer of these paragraphs had been in Congress the last ten months he would be less incredulous. For, from what cause has it happened, that in that most important period so little, so very little, has been done in those essential things that concern the happi-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ness and safety of America — Why has it been, that so much pains has been taken to force a breach between Congress & the State of Pennsylvania — Why so much intrigue to create jealousy, distrust, and hatred of the long tried, firm Whigs & supporters of the American Independence? I am settled in my opinion — Yet I hope that Heaven & America will baffle all these secret determinations and open Attempts. As it does not seem probable at present that Count D'Esteing will come here, I should suppose that the provisions purchased for his support on this coast might aid Mr Wadsworths department — especially as the new harvest is now coming in. I am decided in my opinion, that if the U. States do not get into their public councils such of their Men as possess the greatest abilities and most integrity, in place of number that now they trust; our liberties will be greatly endangered indeed. I believe there are few private clubs of gentlemen in the world that would suffer themselves to be insulted by M. Deane in the manner Congress has been for some months past — What can all this mean? — This is the 4<sup>th</sup> letter I have written to you since my arrival in Virginia. I should wish to know if you receive them. I am yours dear Sir with great respect, esteem, and affection,

TO GENERAL [WILLIAM WHIPPLE ?]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA June 26<sup>th</sup> 1779

DEAR GENERAL,

I wish this may find you as happy at Philadelphia as we are at Chantilly — nothing but the want of rain disturbs us, we have neither wicked, perverse or foolish

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Langdon Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Politicians here whose misconduct makes us fear for the safety of the Country. I have frequently admired the philosophic ease with which you have Contemptuously viewed the proceedings in Congress which I own shocked me exceedingly. I suppose you have fixed your opinion with Mr Pope "what ever is, is right." I believe indeed the wisdom and goodness of the Creator does not frequently deduce from evil, yet I am exceedingly chagrined when I see wicked and weak men have session in and misconduct the public Councils. I understand that our excellent friend Sam Adams has left Congress — I am truly sorry for I well know that his ability and integrity will be missed from any assembly, but indispensable from the one from which he went. As you are the oldest member & the most skilled in Marine matters I take it for granted that you are now Chairman of the Marine Committee, But whether so or not let me intreat you that you prevail with the Committee to order two Frigates into Chesapeak Bay if it is only for a few days — The Confederacy & the Boston can with infinite ease destroy the enemies vessels that are doing us so much injury, causing us so much expence by frequent calls for Militia — They have already burnt several private houses and one public warehouse with between 2 & 300 hhds of Tobo. and carried off much plunder & many negroes — Soon as they see the Militia gathering they embark and go to another unguarded place. They have 6 Vessels, Otter 16, Harlem 12 Guns Kings Vessels — Dunmore 16, Schooner Hammond 14, Lord North 12 Guns & Fin Castle 2 three pounders. The 4 last are Guntridges Pirates. They say the orders are to burn and destroy all before them — an Eastern Man whom they had captured and claimed escaped from them when they were burning the Warehouse and gave us the above account of their force, which is confirmed by others — They land be-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

tween 60 & 70 men when they mean to do mischief — I do not think I can be charged with excess of opinion in favor of our Navy when I say that the frigates already mentioned could destroy these Pirates and return to their Stations after thus relieving our water bound Country and removing the cause of great expence. The frigates by calling at Hampton can get the best intelligence of the enemies situation & force — Do me the favor Sir to convey the enclosed to Mr Bradford as soon as you can) I shall thank you for your foreign & domestic news as well as to know what tunes the fiddle party are playing. My best respects attend my Whig friends in Congress. With sin — I am dr Sir your affct friend and obt servant.

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY July 8<sup>th</sup> 1779

DEAR SIR,

The Express that now waits on you from the field Officers of these exposed counties, furnishes me with an opportunity of thanking you for your favor of the 17<sup>th</sup> ult. It is unnecessary for me to make assurances that it will give me pleasure to hear from you when your leisure permits, or that I shall rejoice at the reputation which your administration may derive from the combined application of ability, industry, and the truest affection for our country and its cause. Every good Whig will wish success to a governor whose principles of action are not the incentives of whim, or the suggestions of partiality; but who is influenced by motives of sound whiggism, which I take to be those of genuine

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 28.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

philanthropy. Early and uniformly as we have been engaged in this great revolution, I shall not hesitate from time to time freely and without apology to give you my sentiments on such points as appear to me conducive to the security of what we have so far obtained. In Virginia we have properly two frontiers, one bordered by a wilderness, the other by a Sea. into both of these issue savages, and into the latter the most savage. Our people on the former, have by long experience acquired the means of securing themselves with a good degree of success against their human brutes. The eastern frontier has not yet been so successful — Nor will it be, until a wise and good administration like that of Alfred shall apply the proper remedy, and like him may acquire from a happy people the title of great — I suppose that the shores of virginia, washed by navigable waters, exceed a thousa[nd] miles. Almost the whole of this must be come at thro a passage of 20 miles which neglected, leaves us vulne[r]able thro so great an extent of coast. Reason points out the remedy, & as the historian says of Alfred so we must be<sup>1</sup> “sensible that the proper method of opposing an enemy, who made incursions by sea, was to meet them on their own element, took care to provide himself with a naval power. He distributed his armed vessels [at?] proper stations—and was sure to meet the Danish vessels either before [or] after they had landed their troops, and to pursue them in all their incursions. tho the Danes might suddenly, by surprize, disembark on the coast, which was generally become desolate by their frequent ravages, they were encountered by the english fleet in their retreat, and escaped not as formerly by abandoning their booty, but paid by their total destruction, the penalty of the disorders which they had

<sup>1</sup> The words “so we must be” are inserted above the line.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

committed.” Our situation is abundantly more favorable than was Alfreds for accomplishing the like purposes. Thro our capes they must come, and thro them they must return—the width but 20 miles. proper Spy boats at sea may notify their approach, and like boats in the bay ma[y] give information of their entrance should they have escaped the vigilance of the former. Forts, and fixed batteries, if feeble will be taken by the enemy, if strong they will not be disturbed, and can only give protection to a mile or two of country round about them. Moveable batteries are therefore the only sure and adequate defence. But this, some say, cannot be obtained against the superior marine force of England—granted for the present. But the disturbance we are now to apprehend from the governmental sea force of britain is not much—our enemies are of the privateer, piratical kind, not formidable for force, but much so for their more than savage brutality—The ill success with which our water defence hath been hitherto conducted has, I fear, disgusted people in general with their only true security, and renders it a most important object to remove the prejudice by an attention so wise to this branch, and such a vigorous application of its power, as to convince of its utility by the security that will be derived from it. I understand that many of our vessels are unfit for use, if so, by laying them up, the few that are fitly made can be more easily manned and provided with necessaries. My engagement, as chairman of the marine committee for some time past, has given me an opportunity of gaining some knowledge in these matters. It is indispensable that seamen should be well provided with those things that are necessary for their situation and employment. Constant work is as necessary as grog, and grog to them is the sine qua non of action and existence—those

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

officers therefore who have laid up their vessels in creeks and coves as some have done, have taken the most effectual way to ruin their men and unfit them for the sea service. It w<sup>d</sup> seem to me that this might be prevented by ordering the three principal officers in each vessel to return their journals and logbook every month or six weeks for examination, by which it will appear how they have executed their orders, and what has been their employment. By visiting them at proper times to see that their Vessels are kept in order and that due attention is paid to the seamen, convinced that their conduct would be accurately inspected, that the good & brave would be encouraged and promoted; whilst disgrace and dismissal followed the worthless, I suppose that our bay and rivers would not long be exposed to the insults and ravage of Gutridge and his associate plunderers. I know from good information, that these pirates express fear of the Maryland gallies, whilst they deride and scoff at our marine force — In these lower counties of the northern neck our situation is really distressing — exposed by being on the water, at a distance from any marine protection, a dispersed militia without arms or amunition, puts it in the power of these buccaneers to infest and injure us without danger of punishment. The late destruction of Wiccomico warehouses will very much disable the people of Northumberland from paying their taxes, & has, I hear, much dispirited them. In other parts of the country I hope the taxes will be cheerfully paid, as vast abundance of money must I think enable the people easily to do it. We have in this county appointed two recruiting officers under the late act, who from their dilige[nce] and popularity will I believe succeed in getting men, but th[ey] are unfurnished with money, an absolutely necessary article for the execution of their business. the act has not pointed out how they are to possess

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

themselves of the bounty to be offered the men, yet without some part of it I presume they will make but a poor progress. be pleased Sir to let me know what is to be done in this affair. Our last recruits, all but three that have deserted, and one who went with his brother to the grand army, are ready to be delivered when called for. I hope that our late successes on the western frontier will effectually secure us for this campaign against the favorite war our enemies have long meditated to carry on in that quarter — The reasons assigned for Hamiltons treatment are strongly and pointedly set forth — His fate is well merited — He has been long known as a cruel & [a]ctive partizan of the enemy in the back country — If we could but introduce oeconomy into our expenditures and more attention to business, I think that vigorous taxation would yet redeem us from our money distress — I own I do not like the issuing of a million ordered by our Assembly.

I am affectionately your friend.

P.S. Affairs seem to be working well in Holland notwithstanding the influence and industry of the Orange family — I hope the majority of those provinces will presently concur in resenting the British insults on their commerce — The most powerful have already done so, by giving convoy to their Trade — Amsterdam & Harlem have already given convoy — Rotterdam & Dort were on the point of joining them.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY July 10. 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I am to thank you, which I do very sincerely, for your favor of the 22<sup>d</sup> ult.<sup>o</sup> — It would give me infinitely more pleasure if my friends could inform me that the essential parts of business were duly attended to and executed. But when these are neglected, and with studied delays obstructed, candor itself must impute the cause to something else than folly, and something worse too. There is not a man in these States but knows the necessity of speedy appretiation, and it is impossible there should be a man in Congress ignorant of the importance of quickly determining on our foreign affairs. Yet, after more than 5 months, very little is done in either of these! It is impossible that such conduct can fail to ruin us in the opinion of the European powers, atten[tive]<sup>2</sup> and sagacious as they are. There are some men so artful in garnishing falsehood with truth that the varnished tale goes down with, perhaps the greater number, who neither are, or <sup>2</sup> will take pains to be informed — Goddards Baltimore Journal of June 29<sup>th</sup> & Hall & Sellers gazette N<sup>o</sup> 2558 contain Samples of artful misrepresentation — I know the knaves who write these things have the advantage, because they cannot be complete[ly]<sup>2</sup> exposed, without exposing secrets that it would be very unwise to publish at present, this the true friends of America will not do, and this those Scribblers know well, which induces the <sup>2</sup> to come forward with so much effrontery.

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. torn.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Yet I think both these deceivers might be handsomely scourged without making improper communications. There has not been, that America knows, a shadow of reason to suppose that G. B. meant to accept the proffered mediation of Spain — And when such a mediation took place, was the proper time for the Belligerent<sup>1</sup> powers to prepare and offer their terms, upon being duly notified by the Mediatorial power — The reason is plain, whilst war continues, the events of that, may between the proffered and the accepted mediation, between the last & the conclusion, have so changed the state of things as to derange totally the terms proposed by either party — The information therefore of feb<sup>y</sup> last, was no ground for poisoning the public mind with assurances of *great news, such news as would rejoice everybody* — &c. &c.

This served only to lull when vigilance & vigor were necessary; to deceive with false hopes where such deception might be fatal — The authors of this ill grounded propogation are now apprehensive of popular resentment, and with their usual effrontery are charging others with preventing a *peace*, a *loan* & what not, because they would not agree so to act, as must in their opinion, inevitably loose to America her own fisheries, which are so indispensable to the being of a Navy — The most essential part of the february information was contained in D<sup>r</sup> Lees letter to Congress dated in August last which they had long before february been in possession of — Had this letter been answered and in a satisfactory manner to Spain, the conjecture is too strong not to be entertained that this power would eer now have been with the Alliance — But those, whom a Writer calls, “*execrable faction*” had rather that America should be lost than saved thro

<sup>1</sup> Ms. torn.

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the medium of M<sup>r</sup> Lee, and so neither that letter of August, nor a subsequent one on the same subject have ever been noticed! Here is the crime, which the Criminals cannot answer for at the bar of a judicious public — By M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lees letter to me of<sup>1</sup> december the 20, extract of which I had the honor to send you<sup>2</sup> it is plain that the party had settled their plan of recal last Fall, because M<sup>r</sup> Deane had written to Europe so long before as that his letter was arrived<sup>3</sup> prior to the 20 of december, informing that Congress had design to change all their European appointments, & that he was to return in a *lucrative* employment — Now we know that the party have been working to this end for many months past. And the Scribbler in the Baltimore journal alluded to, is still working at this *lucrative* employment for M<sup>r</sup> Deane — The very satisfactory account already given of his expenditure of the public treasure formerly trusted to him, is to be sure a strong reason for allowing him to finger more public money. But this letter writer would imply that we failed to get a loan because M<sup>r</sup> Deane was not sent presently back to obtain it — Yet, most certain it is, that so long since as winter 1776 when Congress sat at Baltimore, M<sup>r</sup> Deane & his Colleagues were all empowered & directed to obtain if possible a loan of 2 or 3 millions of pounds sterling — If it could be done, why had it not been done, — But we know that the American Commissioners had been and were endeavoring in vain to obtain this loan — Yet it is in this letter insinuated that M<sup>r</sup> Deane could do it — Oh impudentia! — M<sup>r</sup> Lovel sends me an extract from a french Newspaper in which is inserted a letter of D<sup>r</sup> Lee's to the printer on

<sup>1</sup> The word “ April ” is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> The ten words preceding are inserted above the line.

<sup>3</sup> Hole in the paper.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Deanes Libel<sup>1</sup> of 5 december — Would it not be proper to publish in the Phil<sup>a</sup> papers that letter & a translation of it? I have written to M<sup>r</sup> Lovel on the subject, and pray you Sir to consult with him about it — I enclose you two scraps of Purdies<sup>2</sup> newspaper, the one containing Charlestown news, the other our late Act of Assembly restraining their Delegates from Trade — The former tho not equal to our raised expectations, is comfortable, and the latter I think it will be well to<sup>2</sup> publish in the Pennsylv<sup>a</sup> gazettes — If this latter should be too troublesome for you, please give the paper to D<sup>r</sup> Shippen Sen<sup>r</sup> who in his walks can step into the Office & get it done —

I shall be happy to receive the letter you propose writing to me, and after begging pardon for the length of this,<sup>3</sup> conclude by assuring you that I am with very great esteem and affection dear Sir your most obliged friend.

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>4</sup>

CHANTILLY July the 25<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR

The favor that my honorable friend suggested would come by express having not arrived, I am inclined to think it has miscarried — The post appears to me the most certain conveyance, because his route is near me, and because I send regularly to the Office, with and for letters. We still continue to be flattered here w<sup>th</sup> favorable accounts from Charles Town of

<sup>1</sup> “Li” in this word is written over other letters.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. torn.

<sup>3</sup> The word “letter” is here erased.

<sup>4</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 8. Addressed to him as “Member of Congress, /at/ Philadelphia.”

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Gen. Lincolns success. I wish we could see the confirmation. I have packets from France, with newspapers only, to the 9<sup>th</sup> of february, the written letters having been undoubtedly taken out. The papers breathe nothing but war — That between the Emperor & Prussia is stated as going on, & the English papers say that Spain has notified the Court of London of her intending to comply with the demand of France to furnish her with the troops stipulated by the family compact, hoping nevertheless that it would not interrupt the friendship between London & Madrid! A gentleman of Maryland lately arrived from the W. Indies says he came there in a fleet from old france that brought over 10,000 troops — These, except the German war, are favorable accounts for us, since they will probably furnish employment for our enemies in other parts of the world.

I observe the runners for Ministry had reported in London, that Georgia & the two Carolinas had “returned to their allegiance” — this was about the time of opening the Budget, in order to have the contents swallowed with less repugnance — I hope that e’er this you will have received good accounts from Europe — I despair of wise determinations either respecting finance or foreign affairs — To be disappointed in these would make me happy. To be sure there cannot be so much depravity as to pay M<sup>r</sup> Silas Deane any money under the idea of defraying expences,<sup>1</sup> until he has settled a fair and full account — I will protest against it in all circumstances and in every situation. Pray Sir, how much money has already issued for M<sup>r</sup> Presidents table, and does that source of expence remain still undefined and uncircumscribed? I hear you have lately been relieved by the arrival of

<sup>1</sup> The letter “s” is concealed by binding.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

delegates from S. Carolina<sup>1</sup> but I hear nothing of Georgia.

With singular respect and esteem I am dear Sir  
your obliged friend and obedient servant —

TO — — —<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY July 30<sup>th</sup> 1779.

DEAR SIR

It is extremely unlucky for us that Capt. Read could not dispose of my certificates in Statia,<sup>3</sup> because we are in great want of the linnen they were to have purchased. However since it is so, be so kind as to receive and keep the certificates for me, untill I write you further on the subject. I have a very high opinion of our friend T. M. and as bad a one of H—r and company. The former has already done much good to the cause of America, the latter essential evil, and are capable of and will undoubtedly execute every villany in the world to obtain the object they have in view, which is enormous wealth. They are, however as artful as they are wicked, and as you say under cover of high office will pervert every thing to private emolument. They will require such a guard as our friend T. M. whose universal acquaintance, sound sense and penetration, with indefatigable perseverance can alone detect them and unravel their subtlety otherwise<sup>4</sup> protected as they are by hitherto successful plunderers of the public, they<sup>4</sup> will again escape with impunity. I have long thought ex-

<sup>1</sup> The letter "a" is concealed by binding.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. copy. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Transcripts, III.

<sup>3</sup> St. Eustatius. A text of this letter is printed in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, May, 1860, p. 342.

<sup>4</sup> Inserted in pencil above the line.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

actly as he does of this transaction and I will venture any thing upon the issue of it, that the ostensible cause of this purchase comes not here for it. But what then? Flour sells amazingly high in the West Indies, leave may be obtained for sending it to the ostensible Cause, and when there, sold for private emolument as an article of commerce, the public receiving here the prime cost in paper money, which by that time may be depreciated a thousand p<sup>r</sup>cent. Pretty business this? Infinite pains and the best information both here and in the West Indies will be necessary to detect these bad men. If our friend T. M. accomplishes this, (as I really <sup>1</sup> believe he will, when once firmly engaged in it) he shall be my Magnus Apollo, and he will undoubtedly, by breaking up a nest that will otherwise disgrace and ruin America, deserves the thanks of every good man in the U. S. I observe <sup>2</sup> that M<sup>r</sup> T. M. and M<sup>r</sup> P—n—e are both attacked by a scribbler in your Evening Post, of July 9<sup>th</sup> under the signature of *Cato*, — a wretch who is as much their inferior in every worthy respect as virtue is superior to the dregs of vice. You may suppose by this that I know the author of *Cato*. I think myself as sure of it, as that M <sup>3</sup> is known at *New York*. The peculiar effrontery of the man, his real shallowness, his dogmatic determinations, and his pedantic display of reading, or rather affectation of having read much more, than he ever did, are some of the circumstances that point him out, who dictated at least, this repeated specimen of his corruption and his impudence. This scribbler, uniform in nothing but profligacy, assumes the name of *Cato*, tho no more resembling either the great men of that name, than an infant is like to

<sup>1</sup> Substituted in pencil for “freely” erased.

<sup>2</sup> Inserted in pencil above the line.

<sup>3</sup> Following “M” these letters, “orisiana,” over the latter of which is written “ania,” are here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Hercules, or extreme opposites to one another; The author of this Rhapsody being vice in the abstract and the others men of consummate virtue.<sup>1</sup> Let us call him then M<sup>2</sup> instead of Cato; He begins with agreeing "that an anonymous detractor is the serpent of society" yet he proceeds immediately to enact this very serpent, by grossly traducing some by name, others by innuendo, and signs himself Cato. A fulsome eulogy of himself, and some others almost as bad as himself, marks another part of his production. It has been the practice of bad men, deceivers of the public, in all ages, to accomplish their nefarious purposes, by mixing some truth with much falsehood, by loud mouth-ing at times in favor of the public cause and public men. Thus Sempronius will be loud for Rome and Cato. And M<sup>2</sup> will scribble for the American Fabius. He will bluster for peace, be against renewing the cries of the widow and orphan, to encrease the number of those who groan in Captivity; to add weight to their chains, and aggravate the afflictions of the afflicted. This milky mildness he supposed, would never be imagined to come from one whose heart is known to be harder than Adamant, who cares as little for orphans, captives or the afflicted, as he greatly cares for and glories in every refinement upon vice.<sup>3</sup> M<sup>4</sup> is of opinion that "every other our Representatives in Congress has a right to expect protection, from the virtuous whigs of America, while in the execution of his duty." He would insinuate by this that a member of Congress must *necessarily* do his duty, and therefore at all events deserve protection &c. This is no doubt a fine doc-

<sup>1</sup> Inserted in pencil.

"r ania"

<sup>2</sup> The letters "orisiana" are here erased.

<sup>3</sup> Inserted in pencil.

<sup>4</sup> The letters "orisiana" are here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

trine for a Galloway, an Alexander, an Allen, and all such as may resemble them. But the doctrine of Truth will teach us, that no man deserves protection from the "Virtuous Whigs of America," whether he is in or out of Congress, unless his virtuous, innocent or able conduct entitle him to it.<sup>1</sup> The cloven foot of M<sup>2</sup> is fully exposed to view whilst he *labors* to persuade that the right of fishing on our own coasts, need not be stipulated in a Treaty of Peace. He admits that this important right should not be given up in the "most distressful situation of our affairs, — that the God of nature has made it a common benefit." For this then we have the great authority of a scribler in the evening Post, who at the same time admits that Selden,<sup>3</sup> . . . . & the King of Great Britain and his predecessors, have in divers public acts affirmed the contrary. Which then must America rely upon, the opinion of this misnamed Cato, or that of Selden and the King of Great Britain? or are we not to conclude, that unless our right be stipulated by treaty, the latter will continue to assert their exclusive claim, and say to us hereafter: "You knew our claims and you also knew that this speculative right which you rely upon, has ever been esteemed so trifling, that the wisest nations have deemed it necessary to have both the right and the limits of this Fishery fully and fairly described in Treaties of Peace. Your silence therefore on this subject in a treaty of peace, wherein you specifically mark out your rights, is a full and complete cession of the Fisheries in the American seas to those who by former Treaties had considered them in the light of exclusive property described by certain metes and

<sup>1</sup> Inserted in pencil.

"r    ania"

<sup>2</sup> The letters "or <sup>A</sup> isiana" are here erased.

<sup>3</sup> The word "the" is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

bounds. By the Treaty which terminated the last war between France and Great Britain, altho' the latter joined to her claims of "Mare Clausum" the much better title of North-America to these fisheries, yet she deemed it necessary to have the point fixed by express acknowledgement in the Treaty. Nor would France be satisfied without a description in the same Treaty of such parts of the Fishery as she might use. All this would have been unnecessary upon the principles of this Pseudo-Politician because "if after a peace Great Britain should disturb us in the exercise of that right, I conceive (says he) such disturbance to be among those lawful causes of war, which would justify us in a declaration of it, and in calling upon our Allies to assist us." How ridiculous is this writer! but such is the nature of Error. He thinks it absurd to call upon our ally to prosecute the war for this purpose now, but it would be a very just cause hereafter. Now, when our great and good Ally has freely engaged not to conclude either Truce or Peace with G. B. without the formal consent of his American Ally first obtained, it would be unreasonable to desire his aid, for the prosecution of our Independence, as well in matters of Commerce as of Government; but hereafter, when a peace shall have been concluded, and all obligation to contend for this Commercial Independence, cease, then it will be a clear right in us to call upon our ally to enter into a new war for the attainment of this branch of our Commerce, which will have been tacitly yielded, by an unpardonable silence on our part, at the very moment when the practice of Nations has evinced the necessity of being unequivocally clear and express. Without the aid of a Maritime Power, and without a navy of our own, (for we shall thus have foolishly given away our only nursery of seamen) we must begin a sea-war with one of the greatest maritime



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Powers in the world. Fine policy this, and well worthy of a man who affecting to know all things, really knows little of any thing! These Fisheries were first discovered by our Ancestors: they are contiguous to our Coasts: they have been uniformly enjoyed by our Ancestors and ourselves; they are indispensable to our existence, as a people who would carry on an independent Commerce. Our good and Powerful Ally has declared the object of his Alliance with us to be, to maintain effectually the liberty, sovereignty and Independence, absolute and unlimited of the United States, *as well in matters of Government as of Commerce*, and that neither of the two parties shall conclude either truce or peace with G. Britain, without the formal consent of the other first obtained. It has been the policy of the wisest nations, to have those rights of fishing described in Treaties. In defiance of all these, a Scribbler in the Evening Post, would persuade us to say nothing about it, but go directly to war again with Great Britain if she molests us in the exercise of a right, which the Author of Nature has made common.

I am dear Sir, your much obliged friend and obedient servant.

P.S. Surely, the Justice of Congress will incline them to give D<sup>r</sup> Lee's Defence to the Public. They cannot mean to keep their Constituents hoodwinked on a point of so much consequence as the innocence or guilt of the public Servants.

Dogmatic as M<sup>1</sup> is, his impudence cannot be great enough to insist on this as proper, and affrontive as he is, he knows himself too well to assume a place among those . . .

<sup>1</sup> The letters "orisiana" are here erased.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY August 1<sup>st</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

Four days ago I was honored with your favors of the 16<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> of July with their inclosures, for which I pray you to accept my sincerest thanks. I am grieved to hear of your illness, not less on the public than on your own account, being perfectly satisfied that your bodily feelings are not more injured on such occasions than are the public councils by your absence. I rejoice exceedingly at our successes both in the north and in the south — If we continue to do thus, it will not be in the power of the execrable junto to prevent us from having a safe and honorable peace next winter. In this idea I shall ever include the fisheries and the navigation of Mississippi — These Sir are the strong legs on which N. America can alone walk securely in Independence. For some time before, and since the receipt of your obliging favors, I have been much indisposed with an epidemic cold which prevents me from writing to you by this post fully on the subject of my much injured brother A. Lee. These no doubt have been great as they are unmerited, but this is not all, the public cause has, I greatly fear, suffered a deep wound, the healing of which will not, in my opinion, speedily take place, without a remedy, which the vice and power of a certain faction will prevent the application of — I mean a proper censure of M<sup>r</sup> Deane, and a thorough extirpation of those cancerous ramifications with which he has overspread our affairs in every part. I think it may be anticipated

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 9.

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with certainty, that the publication<sup>1</sup> of D<sup>r</sup> Lees defence with the vouchers will be denied. It will carry to the world so convincing a proof of the wickedness of a certain set, that I am persuaded force alone can extort it from them — As a Citizen of Phil<sup>a</sup> I would not hesitate to be one that should apply this procurer of justice to an abused community. It appear[s]<sup>2</sup> to me that M<sup>r</sup> Austins letter, with M<sup>r</sup> Livingstons certificate & the entry in Grands account of 1700 Livres (I think) paid by order to Wharton of L[o]<sup>2</sup>ndon will lead to the complete development of the gambling practise, and Beaumerchais charge of £6323. Sterling to the U. S. compared with Carmichaels evidence seems to fix a truth that I never doubted about, which is, that this transaction was a knavish misapplication of public money. These instances, with the affair of the cutters, and sharing in the contracts for army cloathing are alone, independent of numerous other affairs, to *fix* indubitably a certain character; and by so doing, the propriety of censure, and consequent restoration of American honor will follow. I have been long of opinion that the Scene which opened upon the public on the 5<sup>th</sup> of december was plotted some months before, and the success of it relied upon. These things appear in full conviction by the letters received in France early in december written by Holker, R. Morris, and Dean, proclaiming their triumph, the disgrace of their opponents, and the honorable and *lucrative* return of the latter to Europe. Is it possible that the accounts of Jonathan Williams can pass, and is he to be put into a Consulship, and the public business? I think with infinite contempt, and a good degree of detestation of my *Compatriot* M. S. — If he produces

<sup>1</sup> The “n” is nearly concealed by binding.

<sup>2</sup> Concealed by the binding.

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papers that can in any manner affect my character, I affirm they are forgeries, and thus I have done with him. A fine supply of military stores for the use of this State has<sup>1</sup> safely arrived, after having been long expected. They have been procured by the efforts of my two brothers, and will put us into a good posture of defence. My brother F. L. L.<sup>2</sup> presents his respectful compliments to you, and hopes to have the pleasure of seeing you at his house in your way to Carolina — He lives near to me — It is of much consequence to my brother Arthur that he should receive all the papers that Congress have, shewing the interference of M<sup>r</sup> G — d & H — r in favor of Deane and to his, Lees, injury — Some of these are Pacas & blackcoats information, Burks d<sup>o</sup> the letters to Congress on the subject of sending Ministers & some others which leave no doubt about it — If Sir you see no impropriety in it, 'twill greatly oblige D<sup>r</sup> Lee to be furnished with these by the first opportunity.

I am, with very particular esteem and friendship, dear Sir your most obliged and obedient Servant.

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>3</sup>

CHANTILLY August the 7<sup>th</sup> 1779.

MY DEAR SIR,

I had devoted this day preceeding the going out of post, to have written you a long letter, when behold,

<sup>1</sup> Blotted.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Lightfoot Lee.

<sup>3</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 10. A text of this letter with important variations and omissions and without the postscript is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 223.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the great increase of my cold has compelled me to a third bleeding, and has indisposed me so much, that I shall be obliged greatly <sup>1</sup> to abridge this letter. I cannot omit to thank you for your favor of july the 27<sup>th</sup> which came duly to hand the 4<sup>th</sup> of this instant. You will please observe in my letter by the last post I foretel that the party would not agree to publish D<sup>r</sup> Lee's vindication &c. He must be a very inattentive observer who does not "clearly" see on what principles these people act, so as on most points "clearly" to pronounce what they will do or not do. It is my opinion that if M<sup>r</sup> "clearly out of order" remains much longer with his Junto to 'order' Congress, the united states will rue it most bitterly. I am very sure that I have heared more *talk* about *order* and less *attention* to it, in one week since he came to that Assembly than had taken place in 4 years preceeding his coming. If you have time to read Sully's character of young Servin and will please to deduct nine tenths of the learning and genius, the rest will furnish a fine Portrait of this pretender to every kind of knowledge. You suppose that I shall get the vindication and the vouchers from the fountain, I believe so too Sir, were it not for the vice of Folgerism, which is disseminated with the partners in most parts of America and many of France. A large packet came lately to me opened at one end and directed in the handwriting of my brother D<sup>r</sup> Lee. the written papers <sup>1</sup> had probably been taken out, as none were there. As every Delegate has a right to a copy of this vindication and the vouchers, I should suppose no kind of impropriety in furnishing me with a copy of the copy, for taking which I would most joifully pay a clerk. These <sup>1</sup> papers were inclosed to me, and therefore

<sup>1</sup> Blurred.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

intended for my perusal previou[s]<sup>1</sup> to that of Congress, which would remove objection if any existed before. As the public will most inevitably be made acquainted with the whole proceedings of Congress in this affair, I wish most earnestly, for the honor of many gentlemen now there, that the journal may distinguish properly — To this end, when “order clearly” obstructs not, cant a motion for publishing be made, and the yeas and nays taken? The same on the question for compelling Deane to give security for settling full and fair accounts, and indeed the same on all questions relative to this man. You alarm me exceedingly when you say “do I not see at this instant a man &c” can it be possible that the late Commissioner is to escape with applause! I would not for a thousand worlds have my name to such a vote. — Infamy will certainly attend it to the latest posterity. I will pledge my life upon this. Capt. Duarte of the Portugueze Snow I take to be the Captain and Vessel carried to Boston by the privateer belonging to R<sup>o</sup> Morris & Carter Braxton, if so, and our Assembly are to determine anything concerning it, ’twill be essentially necessary that all the papers relative to the case be sent to that body properly authenticated, and among others, Braxtons instructions to the Captain of the Privateer when he sailed on his cruise. I think this paper is among the Congress files — I shall thank you very much Sir for an authenticated copy of these instructions, as well as the resolve you allude to in your favor of the 27<sup>th</sup> I am ‘clearly’ of opinion with you Sir, that if this affair is not properly adjusted in America, the injury to our cause in Europe will be extremely great. And I believe in my conscience that some people who have the impudence to hold their

<sup>1</sup> Concealed by the binding.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

heads high in America, wish for this consequence. We are taxing here very vigorously, but Sir, if Congress does not stop these boundless emissions, and cease to depreciate the money by giving the Staff bribes to do it, I mean commissions on their expenditures; our vigor will signify not a rush. A neighbor of mine has a letter in this month from Hillsborough in N. Carolina saying that Gen. Lincoln was now stronger than the enemy, that Scot was approaching with his force, and that they hoped soon to give a good account of the enemy. Heaven grant it may be so, because, if we are successful in that quarter, I believe our enemies will be compelled to equitable terms of peace next winter. But I will never call the loss of the fisheries and the navigation of Mississippi equitable—And I am sure posterity will execrate those that do. Pray Sir do you know if my beautiful faced quondam Colleague has taken the Antecommercial oath directed by our Assembly<sup>1</sup>?—I shall be glad to know this.

If you (as I hope you do) still determine to honor Chantilly with your company as you travel south, I pray you Sir to let me know two posts before you leave Philadelphia that I may not be from home, for I should be extremely concerned were I to be absent on an event that I wish so much should take place. With my best wishes for your health and happiness, I am dear Sir your most affectionate friend and obliged<sup>2</sup> humble Servant.

P.S. Cant I be furnished with the Treasury issues for M<sup>r</sup> Presidents Table &c &c &c from december last until now?—

<sup>1</sup> The two preceding words are substituted for "Congress" erased.

<sup>2</sup> The letters "ob" are written over other letters.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO JAMES SEARLE<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY August the 7<sup>th</sup> 1779

DEAR SIR,

An event that seldom happens to me, good fortune, is likely to give my friend some trouble. I see by Dunlaps paper of july the 27<sup>th</sup> last, that one of my daughters and myself have, each of us, drawn a prize of 500 dollars in the late class of Continental Lottery — the fortunate numbers are 91,315 and 89,638. You will see by the inclosed list that we had 11 tickets in that class, but we cannot tell the fate of any but the above two. The favor I mean to ask of you dear Sir, is as follows. That you enquire and let me know the fate of our nine other tickets, and that you dispose of the two prizes 500 dollars each in purchasing as many tickets forthwith in the third class as they will fetch, agreeable to the inclosed list. I find that in order to get the number of tickets proposed in the list, that it will be necessary to add 20 dollars to the prize money, which 20 dollars my good friend doctor Shippen Sen<sup>r</sup> will furnish you with on demand. If any of the other numbers are prizes, be so kind as continue them in the third class independent of the inclosed list. I am not aware of any objection to my plan, but if I cannot get the new tickets upon the strength of our two 500 dollar prizes, I suppose Loan Office certificates may be had for the prizes, and these last sold for money to purchase the tickets with. But the former will be the shortest and least troublesome mode. — I do not suppose that it will be necessary for me to take any

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Conarroe Collection, p. 43. Addressed to him as "Member of Congress/Philadelphia." Endorsed "R<sup>d</sup> 17. Aug." Searle was a delegate in Congress from Pennsylvania.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

steps here to verify that I have the tickets which are numbered in the inclosed list, since I received nine of them from the office in Philadelphia where they are entered in the book for the persons stated in the list; and the other two, vidē N<sup>os</sup> 20,710 & 20,714 were 20 dollar prizes in the first class, which I continued of course. I have all the 11 tickets here, and if it is necessary that I should deliver them up to, and take a certificate from the distributor here previous to my getting new tickets or the certificates, I will do so on your information that it is necessary.

When you have got the new tickets be so kind as deliver them to Dr. Shippen sen<sup>r</sup> to be contrived by a safe hand to me, and let me know the several numbers by letter in case of miscarriage. Thus you see my dear Sir that my good fortune is likely to occasion you some trouble, but I know your goodness too well to doubt your willingness to undertake it for me. We wait with much impatience here to know the fate of the manœuvres upon North river, and what is become of the ravaging party that was in Connecticut.

I understand that the Deneans have been very sensibly touched lately by D<sup>r</sup> Lees proofs of their friends atrocious misconduct. But, is it possible Sir, that Congress can be so inconsiderate about what belongs to their own honor, and so inattentive to what the public good demands, as to let Deane go off without giving ample security for accounting fairly for the large sum of public money that he has had the direction of. Is it supposed that the public will rest satisfied with the secretion of D<sup>r</sup> Lees vindication and his proofs, after the infamous libel published on the 5<sup>th</sup> of december last, to deceive and mislead the community for purposes most abominable? We have had a fine supply of military stores arrived here lately from France (and what is wonderful Silas Deane was not

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

there to send them, nor did Beaumerchais or Montheiu, or Chaumont furnish them) for the use of this State, which will put us into a good posture of defence. With my compliments to your good Lady, I am dear Sir your friend and fellowcitizen.

TO [GENERAL WILLIAM WHIPPLE]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY August 8<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

My indisposition prevented my replying to your favor of the 11<sup>th</sup> by last post, and I am now very unwell but will no longer delay thanking you. We are much obliged to the Marine Committee for their attention, I see the frigates have taken and sent in two prizes, vessels of war.—The other frigate you mention would no doubt have been of considerable service—I am very apprehensive with you that her freight will not be ready for some time—Not until other goods come to replace—I hope the goods coming will be really good, and not such miserable, pernicious stuff, as that to be reprov'd. Worse goods cannot come, so that a change bids fair to be beneficial—God send it may quickly take place—Fancy the “Ugly instrument” is considerably hurt by the dressing lately given by our assembly—The oath anti-commercial ordered to be taken—Pray inform me if you can if the Base viol has groaned it out. I had thought it would stick in the throat not from principal but from fear. No doubt “the old Game” will continue to be played whilst the old set continue where they are.

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Langdon Collection. For the reply to this letter see R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 111. Whipple was a member of the Marine Committee of Congress.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

The best and most faithful friends of America must be extricated by the best and most faithful friends of our enemies; and this is the clue to unfold much of what you see. Did you not enjoy some Phiz's when Dr Lee's vindication and vouchers were read? Some people will always think it "clearly out of order" to give the public this conviction of their own and their friends criminality. But I trust their will be majority of virtue to do this justice to the Community and to individuals. Shylock should have justice & the law — read the law of Moses, "forty save one." I fancy you were not much deceived about the budget — I will engage this, that from this opener it will be general deception, unimportant or partified. I have the most heart felt attachment to our Navy & therefore wish to know that the fisheries go on well, and that the Marine Committee are attentive. If the enemy go on burning in this manner their masked friends in ——— will never be able to bring us again under British bondage, even this finance and foreign affairs are trifled with abused & go wrong. Col. F. L. Lee is very thankful for your kind remembrance of him and sends his respects. He is not well any more than myself. It is impossible for us to be so, whilst the Cause of America receives such injury from bad men. I hope you do not [mean?] to leave Congress soon. You know I am happy to hear from you and you are too much my friend to deny me the happiness. I am yours dear Sir with most sincere affection

Remember me to Mr Marchant, Mr Ellery & Mr Sherman.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PENNSYLVANIA PACKET<sup>1</sup>

[Circ. August 10, 1779]

MR. DUNLAP,—The public may now see by the printed Journals of Congress, that the Hon. Arthur Lee, Esq., continues in high confidential place in Europe, under the authority of these United States. They may see that there was an extraordinary division of sentiment among the Members of Congress, on April 3d, in regard to that continuance — 4 to 4, and 4 divided. They will doubtless conclude that the division was chiefly, if not intirely, a consequence of Mr. Deane's publication in your paper of December 5, last year. And they may also imagine that the same cause will produce, in a degree, a similar effect on the minds of many persons in Europe. You have shown in your last paper that Mr. Lee apprehended this. But you quoted, from the Connecticut Courant, an uncorrect translation of his letter of February 8th to the Editor of the Leiden Gazette, of the 23d, which is truly as follows :

“I pray you, Sir, to give the public the following answer to the contents of a letter which hath appeared under the signature of Silas Deane, viz.: That I declare, in the most solemn manner, that *all the accusations against me which it contains are absolutely false*. A particular detail of the proof which will demonstrate not only that those accusations are false and scandalous, but also, that the accuser has, in all reason and justice, lost the confidence of the public, is due to the Delegates of the United States in Congress assembled,

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in New York Historical Society *Collections, The Deane Papers*, IV. 49. The letter is signed by Lee, with the pen name “Rowland,” and is printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of August 10, 1779.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

whose servant I am ; and I cannot give this detail to the public without their permission. In the meantime I assure myself that a CLEAR AND POSITIVE DENIAL will be regarded by every honest and impartial person as a sufficient answer to BARE ACCUSATION, manifestly dictated by the rancour of a man displaced.

[Signed.] "Arthur Lee."

The letter is introduced by a remark that an affair of Mr Deane's with the Lee family had, *more than anything else*, contributed to give credit to the report of a division in Congress. The public, watchful for the prosperity of their own affairs, and at the same time justly tender of the honor and reputation of their official servants, seldom need more than to be furnished with a true state of facts, to enable them to draw the most judicious conclusions, and to distribute their praise or blame with conspicuous equity. If Mr. Deane's *insinuations* against Mr. Lee have a solid basis, if his allegations can be supported by good vouchers, Mr. Lee ought not longer to hold a confidential Trust ; but if traduced, the public countenance in his favor manifested by their continuing him in office, will at once be recompence and glory. An investigation of facts connected with this business is but a decent mark of respect, due to the people of these United States, from every individual who is in any way particularly capable of coming honorably at the truth of them. It is chiefly from a sense of this duty that I ask a column for tomorrow in your widely circulating paper. I have an inferior motive, which is a report that Mr. Deane will soon leave Philadelphia, being discharged from any further attendance on Congress. My patriotic endeavors may therefore become depreciated, on a delay, by a surmise that I waited for his absence before I chose to appear openly to counteract his publication above referred to. I would not indeed have rested

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

even till now, if I could have dared to present to the public eye only the most glaring presumptions and uncontrovertible inferences. Facts alone suited me.

I believe I cannot, without being tedious, furnish for this time more than one specimen of the manner in which I mean to proceed; but that one will secure for me the public attention hereafter.

Mr. Deane says: "*Immediately*, on the arrival of the news of General Burgoyne's surrender, a treaty with France seemed to the British Ministry more near and more probable; your Commissioners, therefore, were continually sounded, indirectly,—as to their dispositions for reconciliation. *About this time* Mr. Lee's Secretary went to and from London, charged with affairs which were secret to your other Commissioners. Conjectures were formed, it is true, and with the more reason as Mr. Lee was dragged into the treaty with the utmost reluctance. It was agreed that this important matter should be kept a profound secret, yet, a few days from the signing, it was pointedly declared in the House of Commons by the Hon. Charles Fox, Esq., the friend of Lord Shelburne; this gave additional weight to the other circumstances."

Here are several insinuations, one fact, and part of another. To which I contrast the following: On December 4th, 1777, Mr. Jonathan Loring Austin arrived in Paris with the Saratoga Convention. Astonishing as it may appear after Mr. Deane's assertion, Doctor Lee had not any Secretary at that time, Mr. Sayer having left him the June before at Berlin. He did not take another till late in January, 1778, when he employed a Major Thornton, who had been chosen by Messrs. Franklin and Deane to carry a letter from the Commissioners to Lord North, Mr. Lee never having before seen or heard of him. On December 11, 1777, Dr. Franklin writes to Sir Grey Cooper:

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

“ We have prevailed with a gentleman, Major Thornton (to us much a stranger, but who appears to be a man of humanity) to visit the prisoners, and give from us some relief. This gentleman remained in London part of the 3d of January, as appears by some of his letters; an unlucky letter, as I shall show hereafter. I cannot tell exactly the day of his return, but having behaved with laudable spirit on this occasion, he was sent to England by Dr. Lee on February 11th, and a second time on April 30th, 1777, for purposes seasonably communicated to proper persons in France, and known now to Congress. I proceed to the insinuations of half fact: Charles Fox is made the ‘friend,’ while others say he is notoriously the family-foe of Lord Shelburne; and the speech of C. Fox is omitted. Why? Because he declared he had seen a letter of *Dr. Franklin’s*, in which *that* Commissioner of America says to his correspondent at London, ‘ten days ago the Deputies of Congress signed, with the French Ministry, a treaty of commerce wherein all the formalities customary between nation and nation contracting have been solemnly observed.’” Vid. *Courier de l’Europe*, Feb. 24, 1778. If we suppose Mr. Deane did not early know as well as others what C. Fox had uttered in February, let it be kept in mind that Mr. Deane did not publish till the December following.

I have only taken up the paragraph of the publication now, as connected with the insinuation that Mr. Lee had betrayed to the enemy “an important matter agreed to be kept a profound secret.” I leave the candor of the public time to weigh the veracity of Doctor Lee’s accuser as to the facts advanced therein, and to assay exactly the value of his current innuendos. But it is proper here to mention that the missions of the Secretary to London have been insinuated to be for stock jobbing purposes; and that Doctor Lee, disdain-



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ing the suggestion, has been happy enough to trace out a curious scene, in which the crime falls back upon the pate of the accusers, as I shall endeavour to shew in considering again that letter of Thornton's which I have called "unlucky." I shall not[e] what is said of Doctor Lee's being "dragged into the treaty with the utmost reluctance." And I shall show the very honorable nature of the only *two* letters which he has written to Lord Shelburne, after parting from him in London to become our Commissioner, his Lordship not having directly or indirectly attempted to draw a third from him.

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

MENOKIN August the 12<sup>th</sup> 1779

DEAR SIR,

A few days ago M<sup>r</sup> Ford (late Secretary to D<sup>r</sup> Lee) arrived at my house in 7 weeks from France with many letters for Congress, and one packet for the Governor of Virginia which accompanies this. M<sup>r</sup> Ford came to my house with a design to proceed to Congress with the dispatches for that body. They had not heard in France when M<sup>r</sup> Ford came away of the charges that have been exhibited against him. I have advised him to discontinue his journey to Congress, leaving the transmission of their packets to me, and repair immediately to Williamsburg, there to request of the Governor and Council a full hearing on the subject of the charge against him, that his innocence may be vindicated in the fullest manner before the most respectable Tribunal. That M<sup>r</sup> Ford has enemies is unquestionable, and that these will endeavor to browbeat him,

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 29.



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and suppress truth and fair enquiry by infusing prejudices, and by various other arts is equally certain. But, whilst the protection of innocence is, at least, as considerable a duty as the punishment of guilt, the respectable Tribunal to which he means to appeal will protect him in displaying the means necessary for his defence. I have the pleasure to inform you that my two brothers have sent to Congress the most full and complete vindication of themselves accompanied with conclusive vouchers, against M<sup>r</sup> Silas Deanes libel published on the fifth day of december last — D<sup>r</sup> Lees defence has been received by Congress two or three weeks ago. M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lees is now on its way —

Hear if you please what a genuine whig in Congress writes me on the subject of D<sup>r</sup> Lees vindication — “ I did not return from the Conclave ’till 5 °Clock, hard duty for an infirm man. I there heard the vindication read, but there is a man who can never read distinctly & deliberately when he does not like the subject — long debates, whether the vouchers should be read, at length carried in the affirmative. I received much satisfaction, but not so with every body. one seemed to be on a gridiron, another in purgatory, another attempting to take notes, but the subject was painful, he sickened and threw down his pen. one looked to be in a situation in which he ought long since to have been —, suspended — from his eternal versatility I suspect he will become a reconvert. . . . I feel myself happy in finding I have taken the honest side, and that I may therefore congratulate with your families & all your friends. I should have crept into an Augur hole had it appeared that I had (altho mistakenly) been an advocate for a rogue — little as I have left of worldly wealth, I would give 500 guineas for Arthur Lees company to night in this room. he should not leave Philadelphia until he had pointed out the way

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

for obtaining justice to his injured country; his country would not part with him until they had done him honor—An honest man's the noblest work of god. If Congress now suffer M<sup>r</sup> Deane to leave the American shore, before he shall have settled his accounts, or shall have given good and sufficient security to account for all the public money which has passed thro his hands, we shall have to account for our own conduct to the people at large." I wait to see whether Congress mean to publish this defence or not, if they do not, I most certainly will—It is indeed unhappy for my brother, that some very important vouchers must, for the present, not be published, least, whilst he is vindicated his country should be injured by the promulgation of State secrets, which would give displeasure to foreign courts. enough however can safely be given to the public, to shew his innocence and the wickedness of his Adversaries—You Sir will be concerned for the cause of philosophy in one Man—Franklin—

If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined  
The wisest, greatest, meanest of mankind—

I turn with horror from this most degrading view of human nature—To a more pleasing contemplation of the good news that M<sup>r</sup> John Adams [v]erbally sends word he is bringing to Congress—This honest Whig is [ei]ther arrived, or near it, in the same frigate that brings the Chevalier de la Luzerne Minister Plenepo. from France to Congress, who takes the place of Mons<sup>r</sup> Gerard, the latter being recalled—It is supposed for his factious support of Deane here—I have some reason to suppose the good news M<sup>r</sup> Adams brings, is the accession of Spain to our union—The preliminaries being signed between the Emperor & Prussia, it is not improbable that these Courts will presently acknowledge our independency—I rejoice

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that the States of Holland have at last resolved to protect their Trade from the British search, and it is said the Northern Courts are coming to the same point—It is certain that they begin in England seriously to debate about treating with us as Independent Sovereign States—They are in great distress & confusion—God grant these may increase, until they learn to substitute reason justice & humanity for madness, pride, & cruelty—I hope to see you sometime in the Fall, when I will shew you all the papers relative to the innocence of D<sup>r</sup> Lee &c and the wickedness of others—In the mean time it may not be amiss to send you the inclosed, displaying a most wicked plot to injure an honest man—It was quashed by the Gentleman accused insisting on being brought face to face with his Accuser—Mons<sup>r</sup> by S<sup>t</sup> Patrick declined it—Dr. Franklin lives in the house *with this* Chaumont who is undoubtedly a very bad man—Be so kind Sir as present my compliments to M<sup>r</sup> Page & Col<sup>o</sup> Digges—I should have written to them, but I am very much indisposed—Be pleased to preserve the inclosed papers concerning Monsieur Schweighauser for me—Should any Soldiers be procured by our last Act for laying off the Militia into divisions of 25, I am at a loss what to do with the Men, how to get them provided for—the Act having made no provision, directing only that they shall be delivered to the County Lieutenant.

I am, with very sincere esteem and respect, dear Sir  
your affectionate friend.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO ARTHUR LEE<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VA. Aug 12. 1779

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Mr. Ford has arrived and delivered safely all his dispatches for me and for Congress. An Express now waits to carry the latter to Philadelphia—I believe but am not certain that the new Minister and Mr Adams are arrived—If Congress do not publish your vindication & censure Deane I will do the former for them, and the latter will sufficiently flow from every honest man in the world—I mean to keep back such Vouchers as the publication of might offend friendly Courts—There is enough without these—I have persuaded M<sup>r</sup>. Ford to go directly to Williamsburg and demand a public hearing before the Governor & Council where he says he can fully vindicate himself from the foul aspersions against him—I hope he will—I wish our brother William had sent me a copy of his vindication, I shall not get it from Congress with't much trouble—Two posts ago I wrote Mr Lovell to commence yr suit against Deane, and I have left it to your Whig friends in Congress whether to present your resignation or not. I am extremely indisposed at present, so, with my love to my brother, his lady & family, & my boys,

I am yours sincerely.

HONORABLE ARTHUR LEE at/Paris/

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Transcripts, V. 47.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF  
[FOREIGN] CORRESPONDENCE<sup>1</sup>

[JAMES LOVELL]

CHANTILLY August 13, 1779.

DEAR SIR,

The packets that will be delivered you herewith are just put into my hands from France. — I have hired an express upon the best terms I possibly could to carry them to Philadelphia — He is a sober, honest, careful Man, who will I am sure take the greatest care of the dispatches. I have agreed that he shall receive from you, as Chairman of the Committee of Foreign affairs, one hundred pounds lawful, besides his expences to and from Philadelphia — He is a very frugal person and will moderate his expences by all possible means. 'Tis 250 miles from hence to Philadelphia, and will take 12 or 14 days to go & return — I do not think his demand is unreasonable & I could engage no other —

I am dear Sir your obliged & obedient Servant.

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY August 13. 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I have received so many demonstrations of the extreme wickedness of a certain set that I can be surprised

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Department of State, Loose Mss., No. 78, Vol. 14, p. 275. Addressed to Lovell, as above, at Philadelphia and sent by "W<sup>m</sup> Bennet." Endorsed, "Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 1779/R. H. Lee/rec<sup>d</sup> 27<sup>th</sup>." The style of the committee was the Committee of Foreign Affairs, as is shown in the body of the letter. Here Lee evidently started to write "Correspondence" instead of "Foreign."

<sup>2</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 11.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

at nothing they do. Otherwise I should certainly have been astonished at the rascality of that plot to create enmity between M<sup>r</sup> Izard and yourself—It is obvious that the infamous stratagem was planned in Philadelphia, that the tra<sup>1</sup>ve<sup>1</sup>sty<sup>1</sup> of M<sup>r</sup> Izards letter was written there, sent to the partnership at Passi, where Bancroft introduced it under a design of having it understood to come from the respectable authority of Samuel Adams. The Villains reasoned thus — M<sup>r</sup> Izard is a passionate man, and under the influence of passion he may write such a letter as will probably create effectual discord between two, whose united friendship will entirely obstruct the diabolical views we have in contemplation — It is observable that these Miscreants, in order to make their deviltry succeed the better, do almost constantly graft it upon the stock of truth, and in this moral (or rather immoral)<sup>2</sup> as in the natural process, the graft changes entirely the nature of the fruit that would have been produced by the Stock. It was true that Congress had the letters of M<sup>r</sup> Izard and that they directed Deane should have a copy, but every other idea, and every impertinent consequence suggested in the letter S. A. flowed from the party themselves — Your judgement is extremely wise I think Sir, not to shew them you are disturbed at present. The corrupt hotbed of vice at Passi, has produced a tall tree of evil, the branches of which spread over great part of europe and america, and unless it is speedily cut down and thrown<sup>3</sup> away, I easily foresee extensive mischief<sup>4</sup> to these States, and to the cause of human nature — I thank you Sir for your favor of the 3<sup>d</sup> instant, and its inclosures.

<sup>1</sup> Written over other letters.

<sup>2</sup> The words “ or rather immoral ” are inserted above the line.

<sup>3</sup> Blotted.

<sup>4</sup> The “ m ” is written over other letters.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

M<sup>r</sup> Izards letter is now returned — My brothers Secretary, M<sup>r</sup> Ford is just arrived here from France, he brought the inclosed for the Delegates of South Carolina, together with many packets for Congress, thro the Chairman of the Committee for foreign affairs — I have engaged an Express upon the best terms I could to carry them to Philadelphia. I fancy you will find them contain further proofs of the infamy of Deanes Libel 5<sup>th</sup> december, and of some other similar productions of that Adventurer — M<sup>r</sup> Ford would have come himself to Congress with these dispatches, but when he heard of the charges adduced against him he determined to repair immediately to Williamsburg, from whence they originated, and demand a hearing before the Governor & Council — He says that he can demonstrate the falsehood and injustice of the charges, and he supposes they have arisen from some papers he sent over here for publication shewing the misconduct of Deane & his party, which immediately roused that nest of hornets — Let this be as it may, he is gone to Williamsburg to solicit a hearing — He spoke with the frigate *Le Sensible* off the Western Islands — She brings a new Minister from France, *Le Chevalier*<sup>1</sup> *de la Luzerne*, who is a gentleman, of much too high and honorable extraction and sentiment, to enter into the dregs of party, thereby injuring the Alliance and disgracing his Master. With him comes our friend John Adams, with good news he says — I hope and believe it is the union of Spain with our Alliance.

I beg of you Sir, for the honor of Congress and America, that you prevent all display of compliment, and ill placed praise on Mons<sup>r</sup> G — d<sup>2</sup> when he

<sup>1</sup> The “a” is written over another letter.

<sup>2</sup> Gerard.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

goes — I can venture to assure you that it will do no honor to the praisers, and therefore I wish if such a thing is attempted, as I have reason to think it will, that it may be opposed, and the yeas & nays taken — This is a state act now, of covering misconduct, from resentment and from punishment. I wish M<sup>r</sup> G——d to stand upon his own merits and not upon that delusive kind of security which is derived from overstrained compliments which the giver really means nothing by whilst it imposes on the reader — It is not a secret now, that Mons<sup>r</sup> G——d has powerfully supported the Denean faction, that his support has given life, vigor, and effect to their plans from whence such extensive injury has arisen to America — Does any man doubt, that the single publication of that Libel on the 5<sup>th</sup> of december has done more injury to the American cause than<sup>1</sup> a reenforcement of 20,000 men to the enemies general could have<sup>2</sup> produced — If there is such a Man he must be very illy informed indeed — Now that Congress are possessed of all the papers, when M<sup>r</sup> Adams comes who knows so much of these affairs, ought they not to go into the fullest enquiry concerning M<sup>r</sup> Deane, and call upon M<sup>r</sup> Adams to declare *all* he knows, that such a determination may be come to and published as will give ease and information to the American mind, which at present remains distressed and greatly agitated with a belief<sup>3</sup> of great misconduct, without knowing the evil doers, or seeing any steps taken to find them out and punish them. Most certainly, if M<sup>r</sup> Deane escapes<sup>4</sup> without proper censure no man who has any character to loose, can or will serve Congress abroad. This

<sup>1</sup> The letter “t” seems to be erased and “n” substituted for it.

<sup>2</sup> The letter “v” in this word is written over another letter.

<sup>3</sup> An illegible erasure in ink occurs here.

<sup>4</sup> The letter “c” in this word is written over another letter.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Man acknowledges that he was possessed of his recal a month before he left Paris — And in that time, altho there were other Commissioners properly empowered to act, without any authority, for his powers ceased on another being appointed to his place he takes from the public Treasure £1700 sterling, and yet his personal expenses were left to be paid after he came away — Was this not downright robbery — Compare this with his written narrative where he boasts of the mere pittance he brought away with him — The Brig that is now coming in the New Ministers suite is the one that he and Williams bought in partnership for ten times less than her value at a time that they contrived to discourage purchasers by creating a doubt in mens minds about who was properly authorised to sell the American prizes. Yet this man is not in Trade! This Brig is the fine Vessel that Capt. Nicholson complained to the Marine Committee was one of his prizes taken by Williams for himself and M<sup>r</sup> Deane for private use, and let the Seamen have no part of their shares. M<sup>r</sup> Henry & many other gentlemen were present in a full Committee just before I came away, when Capt. Nicholson made this complaint. See also an account of this Prize mentioned in D<sup>r</sup> Lees vindication — I am now waiting to see whether Congress will publish this Vindication & the vouchers, such as may be safely communicated without injuring us with foreign Courts — If they will not, I most certainly will, and assign for reason that they deny this necessary information to the public — I do not think that any public injury can be derived from this, if it does lessen the present Congress in the eyes of the people, equal to the magnitude of that injury which will inevitably flow from these mens succeeding in their extensively wicked system — If Congress will not discharge their duty by censuring the bad and supporting the good servants



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of the public, we must pursue the old plan — *Provoco ad populum* — I have now, both of D<sup>r</sup> Lees vindications, that in answer to the Manuscript sent to Congress by Deane in Oct<sup>r</sup> & his answer to the Libel 5<sup>th</sup> december — & I have most of the Vouchers — those that I want I shall apply for hereafter — I hope Congress will render this unnecessary by directing the publication themselves — Surely there is some moment when “Clearly out of order,”<sup>1</sup> cannot avail himself of the argument from order to prevent your motion from being considered — Let us have the yeas & nays that the world may judge. The Constituent must have some clue to guide his<sup>1</sup> future choice, and know in whom to repose confidence — By your favor I have the resolve in Braxtons case with the Portugueze, and I must rely upon the same goodness to send me copy of his instructions to the Capt. of the Privateer. M<sup>r</sup> Ford says that he was prisoner with M<sup>r</sup> Blake in Jersey, and he desires (if that gentleman should be at Congress) that you will be pleased to inform him that M<sup>r</sup> Ford will thank him for a Certificate stating his behavior during his captivity so far as M<sup>r</sup> Blake observed it or knows it. This may be inclosed to me. My brother Frank thanks you, with much sensibility, for your kind remembrance of him. When Congress go into the enquiry concerning Deane, M<sup>r</sup> Diggs of Maryland ought to be called upon, as knowing a good deal of the gambling in the funds, by Bancroft, Wharton &c &c — If Congress are not satisfied after what they have, and will see in the packets now sent, of the extreme misconduct of those who they have hitherto protected, and if they do not act accordingly, the conclusions which the world will come to are too obvious to be doubted about. Our accounts now

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “their” erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

from the West Indies are very good, and seem well authenticated — The Count D'Esteing is undoubtedly superior at present and is going pretty rapidly on with conquest.

I continue very much indisposed — My cold abates not altho I have been 4 times blooded and taken much medicine

I do most sincerely wish you health and happines[s]<sup>1</sup> and tho I want much to see you, yet I shall be concerned to hear that you leave Congress before they get into a better way than they are at present — Our friend M<sup>r</sup> John Adams is sensible & honest — He is at the same time rather modest than assuming — I fear he will not come so forward in his display of truth as the wicked affrontery of the times demands — If he is publickly called upon, and desired to say all he knows of our foreign affairs and foreign servants, I have reason to think that he will “such a tale unfold” “as will harrow up” &c — Such information he will give as to prevent either “clearly out of order” or his profligate Aid “Black Coat” from proceeding longer in the way they have done. I was once of opinion that the fame of D<sup>r</sup> Franklin would render it unsafe at present to remove him — My opinion is totally changed at present — I foresee abuse without end and injury extreme from his continuance — The vices that used to croud around his heart in great abundance are no longer restrained by checks from the cautions of his head — It is the curse of man, that the vicious part of his nature outlives his reason.

farewell my dear friend and be assured that I am yours with great sincerity and affection.

<sup>1</sup> Concealed by the binding.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [ARTHUR LEE]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, Aug. 14th. 1779

There is no truth that I am more fully persuaded of, than I am that Gerard's countenance of and siding with Mr. Deane and his party has injured the American cause more than a reinforcement of 30,000 men to the enemy's general could have hurt it. Whether he really knew of that libel published on the 5th of Dec. before it appeared in the Gazette, I will not undertake to say, but I am very sure Mr. Deane would not have dared to publish it had he not been sure of M. Gerard's countenance. And it was a common observation of astonishment that they were so constantly seen walking together in the streets. The open countenance uniformly given to Mr. Deane by M. Gerard, after that publication, demonstrated to all the world that he did not *really* disapprove of it. Indeed there is no one point better understood than that this minister of France was the patron and protector of Deane, and the great favorer of his faction. I fancy he will not deny offering or causing to be offered a bribe to Paine, the author of Common Sense, if he would cease writing in Deane's affairs. Everybody knows that the point was whether Deane's faction should succeed in procuring your disgrace.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy. Harvard University, Sparks Mss., XXXII. ii.

<sup>2</sup> The following comment is appended here by Jared Sparks: "In my papers from the French officers it will be seen that Gerard was expressly instructed not to meddle in Deane's affairs. His inclinations were probably on Deane's side, but it is doubtful whether he took any part, other than he supposed to be required by the interests of the Alliance."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THE EDITOR OF THE PENNSYLVANIA  
PACKET]<sup>1</sup>

[*Circ.* August 17, 1779.]

MR. DUNLAP, — I have said that the news of Burgoyne's surrender arrived in Paris December 4th, 1777, when Doctor Lee had no Secretary; and that February 21st, misprinted by you 11th, cannot be termed "about that time," so as to answer the malignant purposes of the published insinuation. But Mr. Deane himself had an acting Secretary, living under the same roof with the Commissioners at Passy, who went off express for London the very day the news arrived. An appeal for the truth of this is made to Mr. Austin, who carried the dispatches to France, and to other Americans who were in Paris or in London at that juncture. Whatever of infamy was in that transaction was charged upon Mr. Lee in common with his colleagues, as may be seen by Thornton's *unlucky* letter, long concealed from Mr. Lee. "Lord North told Mr. Hartley last Saturday, the 3d of January, 1778, that he knew of several persons who had come to London from Messrs. Franklin, Deane, and Lee; and that Doctor Bancroft had been sent by those gentlemen on stock-jobbing business." Worse may be seen by the following certificate, dated Paris, the 11th of April, 1778: "I do hereby certify, that I was shown a letter in London, dated the 27th of January last, which I was told was written by Doctor Bancroft to Mr. Wharton, informing him, that he might depend upon it, he had it from the very best authority

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in New York Historical Society *Collections*, *The Deane Papers*, IV. 63. Signed by Lee, with the pen name "Rowland," and printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of August 17, 1779.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that the treaty with the Court of France was to be signed the 5th or 6th of February, and desiring him to make his speculations accordingly; in the above words, or words to that effect. I do also certify, that I have seen Doctor Bancroft's hand writing on other occasions, and that I believe the above-mentioned letter to have been written by him."

[Signed] M. LIVINGSTON.

Witness, Geo. Digges.

This certificate is from a gentleman of unimpeached character, some time Lieutenant on board the Boston frigate, which he quitted with a recommendation to Congress from the Commissioners. He now commands the Governor Livingston, and is hourly expected in America. Here is the secret betrayed not *after*, but *before*, the treaty was signed. I deal in facts. They are other people who throw out insinuations about Secretary Bancroft's *best authority*, and the corroborating circumstance of Samuel Wharton's draft of Feb. 17, 1778, for 19,520 l. 14 s. on Mr. Silas Deane.

I will finish this business quite, now it is on hand. Thornton was *unlucky* in telling Mr. Deane and Doctor Bancroft about Doctor Bancroft's and Mr. Deane's speculations in the stocks. There were soon whispers that Thornton had been concerned. Mr. Lee taxed him with it, but was satisfied, by the sight of a letter from Mr. Wharton, that tho' strongly solicited, Thornton would not hold a correspondence with him. The whispers grew stronger during his absence. Droll arts were used, but in vain, to deprive him, while innocent, of Mr. Lee's confidence. At length the right mode was pursued. The man was inveigled into delinquency; and being called to render an account, he absconded. These things appear by letters from

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Mr. Lee, and other papers. He writes to Thornton, May 17th, 1778. "I received yours of the 7th and the newspapers. I mentioned to you the charges against you here of stock-jobbing. You must avoid giving any foundation for them. You know the quarter from which the accusation comes. It would be doubly improper for any one employed by me to be doing that which in itself is wrong, and which I am censuring in others." He writes to a friend in London, July 25th, 1778. "As Mr. T's conduct has appeared to you suspicious, I shall be obliged to you for any information that may be relied upon relative to his proceedings, which are the more to be watched as he has staid a long time contrary to my orders, alledging sickness." It is needless to give other extracts. What satisfied Mr. Lee was Mr. Austin's testimony that he had seen a note of Mr. Wharton to Mr. Thornton for 500 l. payable on condition that war should be declared before a certain day.

I promised to show the honorable nature of the only two letters written to Lord Shelburne by Doctor Lee after he became our Commissioner.

"Dec. 18, 1776.

"My Lord,—A very few hours after my last letter to your Lordship, brought me the desire of my country to serve here in a public character. Your Lordship, I hope, thinks too well of me to suppose I could hesitate a moment. In fact, almost the same moment saw me bid adieu, perhaps forever, to a country where, from choice, I had fixed my fortunes, and to a people whom I most respected and could have loved. But the first object of my life is my country; the first wish of my heart is public liberty. I must see, therefore, the liberties of my country established, or perish in her last struggle.



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“In truth, I have long despaired even of a struggle for liberty in England. I will not insult Scotland with the idea. It is not the subtle Wedderburn poisoning the fountain of public security; nor the ruthless Thurlowe, deliberately butchering the liberties of his country, that makes me despair; but—and yet, perhaps, the people are only not virtuous, and America may yet, with a sort of filial piety, reanimate her expiring Constitution.

“Our pater patriot, with whom and Mr. Deane, I am joined in power, is in good health and spirits. If Fate will have it that America, as she has reared her temples and her altars to Liberty, must furnish her victims too, I know not where she can find a sacrifice more respectable.

“Should the event of this measure be found fatal to England, it is the perfidy of her Ministers, which would never offer anything that could be trusted, which compels it, and to which the consequences are justly imputable.

“I beg your Lordship to remember me as one who can never cease to have the most perfect esteem for you. I have communicated to the Abbè Raynal all the facts I could collect, in answer to his questions. He will write to you soon.

“May I beg to be remembered to our friends in the College, and to those out of it, who, I hope, will always do me the honor of remembering me—Col. Barré, Mr Dunning, Doctor Priestly, Doctor Price, &c.

“I have the honor to be, &c.”

“Dec. 10, 1777.

“My Lord,—I have the honor of enclosing you the copy of a letter, transmitted at the same time, to the first Lord of the Treasury. The honor of the

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

nation and the rights of humanity are too much interested in the object of it, not to receive your Lordship's advocacy. The enclosed papers contain the principal transactions between the northern armies. The burning defenceless towns and everything before him, as General Clinton has done, will probably draw upon him and his the vengeance which such enormities deserve, in spite of all the endeavors of Congress to prevent any hasty retaliation. The South-Carolina Gazettes mention the arrival of an American Captain who had been taken by Captain Jarvis, and who mentions with the highest praise the generous and humane treatment he received from that officer. We have had from other prisoners accounts equally to his honor, which I am sure will give your Lordship pleasure. Capt. Jarvis may be assured that such conduct will command from us the praise and esteem which is always due to a generous enemy.

"The necessity which has made us enemies for a time, and separated us forever from the same government, has not altered the esteem felt for the good and wise in England. Among these I hope your Lordship and your friends will accept an assurance of my respect and friendship. I condole most sincerely with the family at Coombwood for the misfortune at New-York.

"I have the honor to be, &c.,

"A. Lee."

I must not now send you counter proofs to the insinuation that Doctor Lee was "dragged" into the Treaty, because I shall, perhaps, fancy to give extracts from *all* those of his public and private letters written about that period which have come to my view. I cannot close, however, without noticing the insidious use of the singular number. There were two treaties. Did

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

he not joy and rejoice at the treaty of Alliance? He objected to one single article in the treaty of commerce, which the equanimity of France readily abolished upon a suggested wish of Congress.

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY 21<sup>st</sup> August. 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

Before this reaches you I hope you will be very comfortably placed in your new lodging. I do not know how it will be in other respects, but I think the neighborhood must be better than the one you left, unless you should have fixed anywhere in the neighborhood of  $\frac{\text{black heart}}{\text{black Coat}}$ , which I do not suppose. W.

H. D. is still daubing the News papers with filth I see — A piece in our papers addressed to S<sup>r</sup> Henry Clinton K. B. This nonsense is too dull even<sup>2</sup> to be laughed at, — 'Tis strange the vanity of this scribbler should be so great as not to see what all men see, that every body but a few designing knaves, consider his publications as disgracefully stupid. How Congress can answer to their constituents for suffering Deane to go off without giving security, after the charges that have been exhibited against him by D<sup>r</sup> Lee vouched as they have been, is to me inexplicable — I fear the<sup>3</sup> yeas & nays will not illucidate this matter properly to the public. A certain set of men have so managed,

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 12. Endorsed as received August 30, and acknowledged August 31.

<sup>2</sup> The word "even" is written above the line.

<sup>3</sup> Written over other letters.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that altho they have partly<sup>1</sup> failed in a most nefarious  
———<sup>2</sup> yet the world will be puzzled to trace them,  
and properly to know their conduct. But to pay a  
man for misconduct is shocking indeed. There is  
nothing better known than that this mans misconduct  
here since [h]is arrival from france has done more injury  
to the cause of the united states [than] 40,000 such men  
exerting all their talents to serve it, could have done it  
good. Congress have but one thing more to do, and the  
*piece* will be, perfect — Bedaub his friend and supporter  
G——d with praises on his going away — They know  
the use that has been made here of the praises Deane  
brought with him. The farce may be repeated — And  
the whole misconduct will recoil, and fix on Congress —  
Dreadful misfortune to befall the representative coun-  
cil of young and rising republicks, the capital support-  
ers of whose system should be virtue and wisdom!  
These will of course detect, abhor, punish not praise  
and reward vice. I had the honor of writing to you  
on the 13<sup>th</sup> instant by the express that carried dis-  
patches to Congress from france, I hope you received  
that letter safe with its enclosures, and that e'er this,  
the new Minister who is a gentleman, and our worthy  
friend Mr Adams will have arrived safely in Philadel-  
phia — If the latter is called upon by Congress to say  
what he knows of the late & present conduct & con-  
ductors of our affairs abroad, it may be of essen-  
tial service to the U. States — The appointment of  
a person to settle the accounts in france may be a wise  
or a wicked measure as happens to be<sup>3</sup> the person ap-  
pointed for the purpose. Send a man from here  
vested with proper powers, and let him be skilful in

<sup>1</sup> The word "partly" is written above the line.

<sup>2</sup> A blank in the Ms.

<sup>3</sup> The three words preceding are substituted for "is."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

business, firm, and of unimpeachable integrity — in no manner whatever concerned with any of the parties having accounts to settle — After all, I will suppose Deane in France or Holland and refusing to settle, where is the coercion? Observe if attempts are not made to have a M<sup>r</sup>. Johnson Merchant in Nantes to settle these accounts — The very circumstance of his having been already proposed by Deane for this purpose<sup>1</sup> is an argument why he ought not.

My cold, with fever, continues so to persecute me that I will add no more at present than my assurance of being, dear Sir, with the most respectful attachment your obliged friend and very humble servant.

M<sup>r</sup>. Deanes friendship for M<sup>r</sup>. Johnson of Nantes is evident from the former<sup>2</sup> having proposed the latter either for a consul, or for settling accounts, or both: which may be seen in some of the papers on the files of Congress.

Honorable

HENRY LAURENS, esquire  
Member of Congress  
Philadelphia

TO [THE EDITOR OF THE PENNSYLVANIA PACKET]<sup>3</sup>

[Circ. August 24, 1779.]

MR. DUNLAP, — Mr. Lee “was dragged into the treaty with the utmost reluctance,” says S. Deane. I shall make it appear that, from the moment the treaty was taken up by the French Court, Mr. Lee was anxious

<sup>1</sup> The words “for this purpose” are inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “latter” erased.

<sup>3</sup> From the text printed in New York Historical Society *Collections*, *The Deane Papers*, IV. 73. Signed by Lee, with the pen name “Rowland,” and printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of August 24, 1779.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

for its conclusion, rejoiced in the event, and expressed most sanguine expectations from it. The success at Saratoga reached France December 4, 1777. On the 18th the Commissioners *jointly*, with *equal* warmth of expression, communicated to Congress the assurance of a speedy alliance. On the 19th, Mr. Lee writes to his brother Richard Henry: "Our joint dispatches will inform you how near we are to a conclusion of what must settle the question between Great-Britain and the United States for ever. I see no reason to doubt the good faith of what they promise here, and much to *admire the substantial wisdom of it.*" On February 5, 1788, to the same: "The delay of our dispatches enables me to add this to my former, and to assure you that the business has gone on with all possible dispatch, and that in all human probability my next will inform you of its happy conclusion." On the 9th, to his brother Francis: "I congratulate you, *with all my heart*, on the treaties which Congress will receive by the frigate that brings this." On the 17th, to the Hon. S. Adams: "Let me embrace you, my dear friend, on the accomplishment of all our labors by the treaties which will accomplish this, in which the Liberty, Sovereignty, and Independence of the United States are secured. I thought it absolutely necessary that we should urge the insertion of Sovereignty, that there might not hereafter be any question on that head, as there was long in the case of the United Provinces and the Swiss Cantons." On the 28th, to the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs: "Our general dispatches will convey to you the bills as they are now passing in the Parliament of Great-Britain, for appointing Commissioners to negotiate with their *deluded* subjects, and declaring in what manner they will be *graciously* pleased in future to exercise the right of *taxing us*. It would not be do-

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ing justice to their bills to attempt any comment on them upon them. They speak for themselves, and loudly, too; but the Ministry of England give out that they have dispatched half a million of Guineas to pave the way to a favorable reception of their propositions. And I know from the best authority here that they have assured Count M. of their being sure of a majority in Congress. By such base arts do they endeavor to cover their nakedness and sustain their desperate cause. France has done us substantial benefits — Great Britain substantial injuries. France offers to guarantee our Sovereignty and universal freedom of commerce. Great Britain *condescends* to accept our submission and *monopolize* our trade. France demands of us to be indepen[den]t. Great Britain, tributary. I do not comprehend how there can be a mind so debased or an understanding so perverted as even to *balance* between them." On March 1st, to the same: "I was in hopes today's post would have brought us news from England, and the acts for negotiating with you. If we may judge of them from the bills, they will be an everlasting proof of the feebleness and folly of our enemies. I trust their Commissioners will return as they came, unless they have power and do acknowledge clearly and fully the Sovereignty and Independence of America as an indispensable preliminary." On the 19th, to the Hon. Henry Laurens, P.S.: "Tomorrow we are to be presented to the King of France, and the English Ambassador quits this Court without taking leave. War must immediately be the consequence, as these movements have been determined upon from the treaty of amity and commerce which we have concluded with this Court having been announced in form to that of London. The consequence of this, in relieving our country from the chief weight of the war, cannot but follow, and I congratu-

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late you upon it most sincerely." On April 4th, to the same: "I trust he (Mons. Gerard) will conduct his negotiation agreeable to what appears to me to be the disposition of the Court and Ministers here — fairness and generosity." I restrain myself from adding extracts of what Mr. Lee has written to Governor Henry and others, tending to illustrate the point of his sanguine expectations of the consequences of the alliance with France; having proved that he wished for it, and rejoiced at its completion, no one can doubt concerning the true ground of that wish and that joy.

It is proper here to notice the insinuations respecting an improper connection between Dr. Lee and Dr. Berkenhout. The ideas of the former as to an accommodation with Britain being a good appendix to the anecdotes of his strong attachment to our present allies. Dr. Lee not only communicated to his colleagues a part, as Mr. Deane says, but all of the correspondence alluded to, which concerned them jointly. He went further. He laid it before the French Ministry, and his answer was made by their unanimous consent. Very unlike this was Mr. Deane's conduct in two cases, which may be hereafter mentioned. Nor was Berkenhout's correspondence with Mr. Lee broken off by "Howe's success," but because the English Ministry understood there was a difference between Dr. Franklin and Mr. Lee, which rendered it useless to treat with them. This report had been propagated industriously both in France and England, during Mr. Lee's absence at Berlin, indubitably by the man and the tools of the man who thought himself "saddled" with a colleague of strict honor and just economy. Mr. Deane tells that Berkenhout said, after his release from prison here, "that he had letters to the Hon. R. H. Lee, Esq. from the Hon. Arthur Lee, Esq. This falsehood may possibly have originated with

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Berkenhout. Mr. Lee not only did not write a line by Berkenhout to his brother or any other person in America, but neither he nor Mr. Temple ever apprized Dr. Lee of their intentions of going. He was informed of it by others, just about the time of their sailing, and had some correspondence concerning it. A good American Whig, now in France, and the author of some late interesting notice to Congress, wrote to Dr. Lee from London, May 1st, 1778: "I hope you are satisfied about Temple and Berkenhout; the doubts are great here. If you think they are right, let me know, that I may satisfy myself and others." To which an answer was given, May 11th, "T. and Dr. B. never apprized me of their going. I thought well of their intentions in general, but this adventure gives no proof of the soundness of their judgment. I am of opinion they will not be suffered to land without taking the oath of allegiance; and it seems to me that their errand is somewhat dangerous on their part, and very foolish on that of their employers." This shews what he thought *ought* to have been the consequence of their coming. It seems one of the men is yet in employ, for Dr. Lee writes, January 5th, 1779: "The inclosed copy is of a letter from Dr. Berkenhout, by which Congress will see how much our enemies are distressed, and yet how inveterate they are in their persuasion that because everything is venal among themselves, therefore it must be so among us. It looks like a visitation upon the King of England and his advisers, that experience never makes them wise. They see and have seen, or rather feel, the necessity of making peace. They have tried all undue means in vain, and yet they still persist in dishonoring and disgracing themselves by a repetition of ineffectual attempts, and neglect the only obvious means pointed out to them by Congress for obtaining upon honorable



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terms the pacification for which they will shortly be obliged to sue most humbly.

Xmasday, '78.

“Once more (as Ranger says) safe to the temple! I hate all your bloody-minded rogues on both sides the question. Peace, everlasting Peace, is my hobby-horse and my pride; *illam Coluisse artem quae humanum genus conservare docet*. I dreamt last night that you and I met somewhere on the Continent of Europe; whether it was at Paris, at Spa, at Brussels, or at Aix la Chapel, I am not certain. I thought I had ten thousand things to communicate; that we entered deeply into several important disquisitions; that every obstacle vanished before us; that we restored the jarring world to harmony, and that *emoluments* and *honors* were the rewards of our labour. If you have had any dream of this sort, tell me so, and I will meet thee at Philipi, be that where it may.

“These are times, my friend, when much may be expected, because much may be done. Do not treat this matter lightly. Tell me only that I may come with safety, that you wish to see me, and that, notwithstanding all you may have heard, you believe me when I swear by our ancient friendship that I am

“SEMPER EADEM.”

Mr. Lee as before, communicated his intended reply to his colleagues and to the Ministry. His letters to and from Mr. De Vergennes do him much honor, as well as the following answer sent to London:

PARIS. January 7, 1779.

“Your favor of the 25th did not reach me so soon as by the date it should have done. I congratulate the ladies very sincerely on your safe return from an expedition the fruitlessness of which I could easily have foretold. My *waking* opinion is, that a meeting any-



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where will be equally fruitless on any other plan than that marked out by Congress; that without the concurrence of our allies, no Conference will be held or treaty made; that you will come with safety and effect, if armed with adequate powers, to acknowledge the Sovereignty of the United States, and are content with terms consistent with the most perfect good faith to our allies.

“On these conditions our jarring worlds may harmonize again; and I am persuaded that delay will only add to these demands, and render the blessed work of peace more difficult. However we may lament the calamities of war, we are determined it shall not end but in permanent peace and safety.

“You have always known me to be sincere, and you may be most assured that I never was more so than at present. Adieu.”

I fear I have already engrossed more than the portion you promised me of your paper.

TO [THE EDITOR OF THE PENNSYLVANIA PACKET]<sup>1</sup>

[*Circ.* August 31, 1779.]

MR. DUNLAP, — My plan has been to notice in order such parts of Mr. Deane's address of Dec. 5, 1778, as called in question Doctor Lee's fidelity to America and to her ally, intending afterwards to make some remarks upon other passages less material to the public. I think I have gone thro' with the first class, except a single instance. Mr. Deane told the world that “a gentleman of character told him that his correspondent

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in New York Historical Society *Collections*, *The Deane Papers*, IV. 79. Signed by Lee with the pen name “Rowland,” and printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of August 31, 1912.

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in England had seen a letter from the Hon. Arthur Lee, Esq., dated the very day on which the treaty was signed (tho' it was not finished until near nine o'clock at night) in which were nearly these words: This day the new partnership was signed and sealed, and the new house will begin to do business immediately: If the old house means to have anything to do further, and means honestly, they must make their proposals immediately." Had Mr. Deane named this gentleman of character or his correspondent, Mr. Lee or any other person could have traced and refuted the falsehood. But as it was contrived, Mr. Lee could only place his denial against Mr. Deane's affirmation; and though the public mind might not decide absolutely, yet it would be tainted with the suspicion that there must be something in the accusation, or a man would not hazard his name to it. Mr. Lee has been more fortunate than Mr. Deane intended, as may be seen by the following letters:

COPY OF A LETTER FROM THE HON. ARTHUR LEE, ESQ.,  
TO MR. SAMUEL PETRIE IN PARIS, DATED PARIS, APRIL  
8, 1779.

SIR, — It appears, by a letter lately published in the London papers, that Mr. Silas Deane has desired his correspondent in Paris to obtain from you "a copy of the letter which you received in March last from London, which gave the information of the signing the treaty."

It is probable you are not unacquainted with Mr. Deane's having accused me publicly of being the author of that information so given, of the signing of the treaty, and this (as he says) upon the authority of a respectable person in Paris, who had received such a letter as he writes for a copy of from you.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I therefore beg that you will do me the justice to inform me explicitly whether you gave Mr. Deane the information upon which he founds his accusation, and who the person is in London who pretends to have seen a letter written by me, giving intelligence of the signing of a treaty with France, and dated the night it was signed.

I am sorry to trouble you on such a subject, but you must be sensible, Sir, how necessary it is that an untruth of this nature, whether lightly or maliciously asserted, should be traced to its author.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

[Signed] ARTHUR LEE.

### EXTRACT FROM MR. PETRIE'S ANSWER

ARTHUR LEE, Esq.

Sir, — In compliance with your request, in your letter of yesterday, to be explicit, I now inform you that I do not recollect ever showing any letter to Mr. Deane that I thought had any reference to you but I well remember reading to him a paragraph out of a letter received from London, stating that intelligence of the signature of the treaty with France had been transmitted there the very night on which it was signed, expressed in terms which could not have been misunderstood; and which intelligence, from a concurrence of circumstances, appeared to have been communicated by your brother, the Alderman. Of this fact I cannot suppose you ignorant.

When I showed this letter to Mr. Deane, I meant only jocularly to upbraid his secrecy respecting a transaction which I understood your brother had unreservedly communicated several weeks before, but

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I had no idea of bringing censure upon any person whatever.

[Signed] S. PETRIE.

PARIS, RUE ST. ANNE,

Friday Morning, April 9, 1779.

### THE HONORABLE A. LEE'S ANSWER

PARIS, April 9, 1779

SAM. PETRIE, ESQ.

Sir, — I had the honor of receiving your answer of this day's date to mine of yesterday. It is entirely satisfactory as to myself. But I cannot help believing your correspondent was mistaken as to my brother's having been the writer of such a letter, because I did not inform him that the treaty was signed till long after, and I am most sure he did not know it at the time he is supposed to have given the intelligence.

I am obliged to you, Sir, for the readiness with which you have given this satisfaction, and beg you will believe it was with much regret I gave you the trouble.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

[Signed] ARTHUR LEE.

Besides infidelity, Mr. Deane wishes the world to have an impression of Dr. Lee's incapacity for executing a political commission. For he says that "by a wanton display of his errand, Mr. Lee gave great and just cause of distrust to the Court of Madrid," and hints that, therefore, he was restricted to the city of Burgos. He says, also, that Mr. Lee "was so unfortunate as to do nothing at Berlin, unless, indeed, we may give the name of business to the loss of his papers, by which a discovery was made of the secrets of his colleagues, and the British Ministry enabled to

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

counteract the measures taken for the benefits of America." Here I am staggered in my first intentions. I was to give facts. I am prompted to supply their place by the highest wrought execrations upon a man who knew that he was delivering in both instances the most downright falsehoods, which no one could prove by producing vouchers without running into an indiscretion, greatly criminal, both in regard to Spain and Prussia. Have I not produced enough on other points to show that I can command the most authentic papers? Will not a sensible public readily conceive that the disposition of Spain and Prussia is to be declared by themselves *in their own time*. I shall only now assert that Dr. Lee was, in both cases, an able, judicious Agent. The time may come when I may tell what great things Mr. Lee *had* done within the compass of Mr. Deane's knowledge at the time of his publication.

TO CHARLES LEE<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY August 31<sup>st</sup> 1779

DEAR SIR,

I am much obliged to you for your favor of the 24<sup>th</sup> past with its enclosures, both which, with your letter for the Squire, I shall send to him shortly. I congratulate you with great sincerity on your brothers address and success. It was a soldierly performance and will do him honor. The declaration of Spain effectually secures the downfall of G. Britain. A dreadful example to wicked princes, and people abandoned to luxury. A mighty empire quickly crumbled to dust — An empire that five years ago terrified the

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Lenox Library, Ford Collection. Addressed, "Charles Lee esquire / in / Philadelphia." Marked "Keep."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

world, and trampled under foot the rights of humanity, and the principles of justice. The ways of heaven are just as they are inscrutable. You say that the "enemies of my family wish he (Maj: Lee) bore another name" — I am contented that they wish what pleases them best — I shall be allowed I hope in my turn to rejoice, that these enemies have no other cause for their enmity, but an inflexible adherence, on our part, to the independence, the happiness, and the interest of our country. To this Tory cause of enmity in many, you may add if you please, a contemptible envy in a few. Every virtuous man will agree with Leonidas, that honor, gratitude, and good faith, bind us strongly to France in the first place. But it would be insanity to go the lengths he intemperately advises. There is however this reason in favor of such hyperbolic writers, that they may put people into some train of thinking, and thereby prevent the danger of lapsing too far into British systems of any kind, which antient partialities and the present predilection of many, might otherwise endanger. The true policy of the U. S. I apprehend to be universal peace and friendship with the whole world. Whatever excess may be shewn of friendship for any, it should be for France.

My brother Dr. Lee in his letters to me expresses much friendship for, and a high opinion of Mr. Ingersolls abilities — He has written pressingly to have an Action of Libel immediately commenced against Silas Deane for his publication of December the 5<sup>th</sup>. And he desired that Mr. Ingersol might be retained and employed in this suit. The doctor sent his powers to Mr. Lovell Col<sup>o</sup> F. Light. Lee & myself — I have written repeatedly to Mr. Lovell<sup>1</sup> desiring that my

<sup>1</sup> James Lovell was sick, and on August 31, 1779, answered Richard Henry Lee's letter of August 22 in regard to the controversy. For Lovell's letter see R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 231.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

brothers request might be immediately complied with—I had some money in the hands of old D<sup>r</sup> Shippen, which I proposed should be employed this way. Pray have you heard anything about it, or has the suit been commenced. D<sup>r</sup> Lee desires that very heavy damages may be laid, in order properly to punish the most false and wicked Libeller that ever disgraced human nature—In the defense and Vouchers sent by D<sup>r</sup> Lee to Congress he has refuted to demonstration every part and parcel of that infamous publication. But Deanes faction in Congress will not suffer these papers to be published—Nothing more clearly proves the rotten bottom of this wicked faction—they dare not stand the test of the public eye—I hope you will continue your agreeable correspondence, and present, if you please, my compliments to M<sup>r</sup> Ingersol.

I am dear Sir your  
affectionate kinsman.

TO [WILLIAM WHIPPLE]<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR SIR,

CHANTILLY, Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1779

I am infinitely obliged to you for your very friendly letter of the 3<sup>d</sup> last, and I assure you that while I live I shall never fail to retain the most affectionate remembrance of you. My health I thank you is well restored, and my spirits not a little enlivened by the discomfiture of those wicked ones whose detestable arts have prevailed much too long for the interest of that cause which we have labored so much to promote and secure. I believe the Confederacies frieght will be a very guilty one, and the Sooner we are quit of it the

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Langdon Collection. This letter must be to Whipple, for his letter of September 18 mentions it. See R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 112.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

better. I think the Companion of M<sup>r</sup> Adams to be the very worthy one he describes him, and such an one, will honor his Country & not distract this, I can feel with force the satisfaction that good men must have received and the chagrin that bad ones felt when Dr Lee's papers were read. But how my dear Friend will the honor of Congress stand if they allow that wicked insulter and injurer of America — Silas Deane, to go on uncensured.

Already you find by his memorial that your silence is constructed into approbation of his conduct, and this idea will be pushed thro the world to his plaudit, and the indelible dishonor and disgrace of Congress. Yet it is most certain upon the estimation with which mankind regard Congress does the future interest and success of the United States depend most essentially, Biddle is the most Contemptible wretch in the world. and if he takes the oath and remains in Congress I am much misinformed if he will not have deep cause to rue it. You have certainly been exonerated of abundance of filth lately from Congress — does not an Augean Stable yet remain. I hope however that it will be cleansed at last. If you do not get a wise and very firm friend to negotiate the fishery, it is my clear opinion that it will be lost, and upon this principal, that it is the interest of every European power to weaken us and strengthen themselves. Mr. Ford is gone to Williamsburg to demand a public hearing before the Governor & Council that he may, as he says he can clearly do refute to the charges brought against him in his absence — Long ere now I suppose you have received the Dispatch he brought, which I forwarded by Express, I believe they contained more proofs of the wickedness of faction. Dr Lee informs us that he will return to America as soon as the treaty with Spain is accomplished. I submit my opinion concerning his

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

resignation to the wise judgment of his and American Friends. It gives me pleasure to hear that you do not mean to quit Congress soon — It is very agreeable to me to hear that our little fleet has fallen in successfully with the Jamaica fleet, I am always rejoiced to hear that our Navy is fortunate. I am dear Sir your most sincere affectionate friend.

TO HENRY LAURENS <sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY Sept: 5<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I was duly honored with your favor of the 10<sup>th</sup> and three days ago with that of the 24<sup>th</sup> of August. but I am surprised that you received no letter from me by the post that arrived on the 23<sup>d</sup>, since I wrote to you by the mail that went from hence on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August which<sup>2</sup> ought to have arrived on the 23<sup>d</sup> following. As I had sent an express with M<sup>r</sup> Fords dispatches for Congress, by which express I had the honor of writing to you, the post following carried no letter from me, nor that which went hence last week. I think that I have regularly received the letters that you have been pleased to favor me with. In a letter from D<sup>r</sup> Lee to my brother F. L. L. is the following paragraph "I expected W. H. D. would take precisely the part he has. His character is too much of the Catilinarian cast, for him to remain long among honorable men. Turbidus, inquietus, atrox — he should be always<sup>3</sup> dealt with as one, who, tho your friend to day, may betray you tomorrow. But I am

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 13. Endorsed as received September 13, and answered September 14.

<sup>2</sup> The initial letter of this word is written over another letter.

<sup>3</sup> The word "so" is here erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

mistaken if his State dont put a mark upon him.” Can anything fit more exactly than “foul, restless, wicked”? no glove ever fitted his hand better than this character does the Man — I find that Deane is resolved not to quit Congress until he has brought that Assembly into utter and indelible disgrace — Under the idea of defraying expences, I understand he has rec<sup>d</sup> money from the Treasury — He now by memorial informs congress that he construes their proceedings into an approbation of his conduct, and solicits that his expences may be born [*sic*] to France & whilst there (to settle his public accounts) by the Congress — To what does all this apparently lead — The atrocious misconduct of this man is coming before the public with demonstrable proofs, of which proofs Congress are in possession, — They part with him, not only without censure, but with evident marks of approbation — Paying him money, sending him back, and maintaining him abroad at the public expence! It is impossible but that the world will join M<sup>r</sup> Deane in construing this an approbation of his conduct by Congress — What then — The proofs of his misconduct coming out, the whole censure will fall on Congress, and M<sup>r</sup> Deane escape all blame under the cover of general resentment against so high a body as Congress — Thus, instead of respect & veneration, censure & disgrace will fall on a Council with whom is lodged the vital interests of the United States — Upon my word Sir this is a most serious affair & I hope will be maturely attended to. I hear with great concern the attack made on your health by the Sciatica — Why in the name of goodness cannot these evils attack the foes rather than the friends of America? I hope however that your care and the skill of your physician will soon enable you to attend Congress, from the deliberations of which I am sure you can be illy spared.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

We have not been able to learn here what has finally become of the enemies army that invaded Georgia & South Carolina — I hope this part of their force has been compelled to go to the defence of their Islands.

I am much rejoiced to hear that so good and able a Man as the new Minister of France is come to that Office — It would have been happy for America had he come here 10 months ago. I am, with the most cordial affection and respectful esteem, dear Sir your obliged friend.

Honorable HENRY LAURENS esquire  
Member of Congress  
at  
Philadelphia

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

DEAR SIR,

MENOKIN Sept<sup>r</sup> 6. 1779

The Chevalier D'Armour who will have the honor of delivering you this letter, having been lately appointed Consul of France for this State, as he before was for Maryland, comes now to pay his respects to you. I have had the pleasure of being acquainted with this gentleman since early in the year 1777 and I have found in him the same unshaken attachment to our cause in times of its great depression as others are willing to shew in the day of its prosperity. The goodness of the Chevaliers head is by no means inferior to that of his heart, few men having more knowledge of books and the world than he possesses. It gives me pleasure to introduce such a person to your acquaintance —

I am yours dear Sir with most affectionate respect and esteem.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 6.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY Septem<sup>r</sup> 12. 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I had the honor of writing to you by the last post, since which I am favored with yours of August the 31<sup>st</sup><sup>2</sup> for which I thank you. I have long since ceased to wonder at any determination of the Conclave, and I shall continue in the same state of mind until I hear that a certain set have quitted, or been removed from that assembly. It would otherwise have been a matter of surprise to me that a body of men representing that kind of government the corner stone of which is virtue, should discover so shameless a partiality as to commit for consideration the insulting memorial of a guilty man, and refuse the same respect to the application of the faithful servants of the public! And not only so, but to compliment guilt with a present of 10500 dollars of the peoples money. I shall be much obliged to you Sir for a copy of the ayes & nays on this money business. It is impossible that the industrious sensible part of the community can continue to submit to such abuse of their property. The account you give me of the sick bed calls to my mind the observation of Dr Young

“A fever argues better than a Clarke.” but alas Sir, how quickly with returning health do bad men return to their vicious courses, forgetting the wise admonitions of a sick bed! I wish we could hear that the enemy have been compelled to quit Georgia, & this I doubt not will soon<sup>3</sup> be the case, if it be true, as the papers

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 14.

<sup>2</sup> For this letter see R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I.

234.

<sup>3</sup> The initial letter of this word is written over another letter.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

inform us, that 2000 men from the Havannah were to attack Florida. We have it reported here that Count D'Esteing has taken Antigua — This is a great affair, if true, and must directly settle the business against our enemies on that quarter. At the same time that I cannot but regret your leaving Congress, I reflect with great pleasure on the happiness of seeing you here.

I am, with the highest respect and esteem my dear Sir your affectionate and obliged friend.

I understand that Braxton is gone to Congress — Surely a mere pecuniary compensation to the injured Portuguese cannot compensate for the injury offered to our national character in the eyes of foreigners —

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY Sept: 19<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I had the honor of writing to you by the last post, w<sup>ch</sup> I am informed by the delay of the rider went no further than Fredericksburg, and will therefore not reach you sooner than this will do. Perhaps this may be the last letter that will find you at Philadelphia, unless the death of M<sup>r</sup> Drayton should oblige a longer stay. Indeed, tho I much wish the pleasure of your company, I cannot help regretting your absence from Congress. By a variety of causes the ranks of the wicked have been lately thinned, and if the virtuous friends of the community continue together, we may hope a revival of that fame which I grieve to think has been so much tarnished by late misconducts. I think that the accession of Spain, with the naval vic-

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 15.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

tory and successes in the W. Indies, the capture of so many Jamaica men, with the loss of the enemies hopes to the west & south, must be more than enough to humble their pride, and procure peace the ensuing winter, without the loss of either of our legs. You know my meaning, the Navigation of Mississippi & the fishery. I hope Congress will make a point of Mr John Adams coming to Congress and furnishing them with an exact detail of their affairs abroad<sup>1</sup> The rectifying of past errors & misconduct does eminently depend upon a clear, full, and thorough knowledge of men and things. And surely, after what has already passed, no manœuvring can prevent the appointment of an honest, capable, disinterested, and spirited character to superintend, and vouch the settlement of the public accounts abroad; or procure the appointment of a person not fully known, and who may have secret connections with some of the money fingerers. To save the virtuous & the blameless from future censure, I [w]<sup>2</sup>ish a motion were made to compel Silas Deane to give security before his departure from America, for a fair settlement of the public accounts, and for refunding what shall appear due from him upon such a settlement: and the ays<sup>3</sup> — & nays<sup>3</sup> taken up on this question — I took the liberty of requesting you would be pleased to furnish me with the copies of some papers in the possession of Congress, which request I beg leave to renew. A vessel that lately arrived in this river from the West Indies brings an account of the taking of Antigua by the Count D'Esteing — This is a capital stroke as it possesses our friends of all the [ar]mies naval stores, and their only refitting place in the West Indies. Do you not think that these events

<sup>1</sup> Partially concealed by binding.

<sup>2</sup> This letter is written over erased letters.

— <sup>3</sup> The letter "s" is practically erased by a stain.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

will produce some wholesome Axe work in England? I wish there may be some immolations upon the Alter of expiring freedom & empire in that Country — I am, with the most sincere esteem, and affection, dear Sir your obliged & obedient servant.

Honorable HENRY LAURENS Esq<sup>r</sup>  
Member of Congress  
at  
Philadelphia

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY Sept<sup>r</sup> 20. 1779

DEAR SIR,

I have the honor of enclosing you a letter that M<sup>r</sup> Mazzie formerly sent to me, and which having been mislaid among a number of papers, prevented me from returning to him so soon as he desired. It is at his request that I send it to you. I find by a letter that I received from Philadelphia by the last post, that some person has been representing a part of my letter to you by M<sup>r</sup> Ford in a manner not altogether fair.<sup>2</sup> This freedom with your letter has been taken in your absence. It was by no means intended as a public letter, but written to my friend — and tho I am sure there is no sentiment in it that I will disavow, or fact that I did not believe on good ground; yet, if the letters of one friend to another are to be subjected to malicious misrepresentation, there must be an end to all friendly correspondence. and the office of Governor will indeed be a painful pre-eminence, if he is necessarily excluded from the communications of his friends.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See Lee's letter of October 13, 1779, to Jefferson, *post*.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

That letter was written when I was from home and no copy of it kept. I shall be greatly obliged to you for a copy of it.

I congratulate you on the accession of Spain to our warfare against great Britain — without a miracle now, the Tyrant and his *friends* must quickly and humbly sue for peace. Three of our Continental frigates have taken 10 Jamaicamen, of which 8 are safely arrived to the eastward with upwards of 5000 hhds of Sugar and rum. This capture will be sufficient to humble the british<sup>1</sup> Merchants like falling ninepins. the loss of the enemies hopes to the west and south are additional circumstances [wc<sup>h</sup>?] promise the best consequences.

I am, with very affectionate esteem and regard, dear Sir yours sincerely

TO THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA<sup>2</sup>

[THOMAS JEFFERSON]

CHANTILLY Sept<sup>r</sup> 23. 1779

DEAR SIR,

I had the honor of writing to you a few days past by M<sup>r</sup> Booth, to which I beg leave to refer. This I expect will be delivered to you by Mess<sup>rs</sup> Loyeauté & Le Maire — the latter is realy unfortunately circumstanced as he states his case — the house with which he engaged it seems have so contrived as that all his private effects on board the ship he came in are detained until this State shall ratify his bargain with them for freight, and cost of the stores she brought over. this his situation renders it of consequence to him that

<sup>1</sup> The word "british" is inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 7. Addressed to him at Williamsburg as "Governor of Virginia" and sent by Colonel Loyeauté.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

his business with government should be quickly determined that he may return to Boston and secure his own effects — It would be very unlucky for us to loose the Stores now at Boston, and the risk will be considerable, unless government can prevail with Congress to order a Continental frigate to bring them round. I think that when the large proportion We pay out of the general expence is considered, it would not be very civil to deny this request if it shall be made.

We are now well provided with Artillery, and if we were as well possessed of the knowledge how to use it, we should be in a good posture of defence so far. Can no method be fallen upon to avail ourselves of the skill and zeal of Monsieur Loyeauté in this branch and for this country? I am persuaded it would make him happy to put our Artillery on a respectable footing, and I really believe that we cannot find better abili[ty] or more industry to accomplish it. I should suppose that some method might be adopted to reconcile join[t] command and dispute about rank, by a select Corps for Mons<sup>r</sup> Loyeauté being detached from the rest and referred to his sole direction, and under whose instruction we might hope to have soon, a well served respectable body of artillery. The worthy General Loyeauté, father of this gentleman, has been so kind an[d] so active in procuring the best Cannon & Artillery Stores for us, that it would be, I think, a genteel and agreeable return to him, that his son should have the forming of a Corps to use them — It seems to come well authenticated that part of Count D'Esteings fleet with 5000 men has arrived at Charles Town and are in a fair way to Burgoinade our enemies in that quarter — Heaven grant it may prove so.

I am, with very particular regard and esteem, dear Sir your most affectionate and obedient Servant.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR SIR.

CHANTILLY. October 8th 1779

I congratulate you most sincerely on your safe return to your family and your country. I hope you found the former in good health and the latter I am very sensible will be at all times benefitted by the assistance of so able a citizen, and the more especially at this time, when the most important of all sublunary things is under consideration, the establishing of Government. Independent of general principles of philanthropy I feel myself much interested in the establishment of a wise and free republic in Massachusetts Bay, where yet I hope to finish the remainder of my days. The hasty, unpersevering, aristocratic genius of the south suits not my disposition, and is inconsistent with my ideas of what must constitute social happiness and security. It is not long since I received your favor of feb. 13 from Paris. So far as immediate personal ease and happiness is the object, it is beyond doubt that the life of a private Citizen is more desirable than any public character whatever, and such especially as call us far from home. But my friend we must consider that individual happiness flows from the general felicity, and that the security of the whole is the safety of particulars. What must become of the American cause and character, if her councils at home and abroad are to be filled and conducted by half Tories, weak, ambitious, avaricious, and wicked men? These considerations induce me to wish that you may not give up the thoughts of public service until our affairs are better settled. I wish with all my heart

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original supplied through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams. A text of this letter, with variations and dated "October 7th," is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 226.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that the Chevalier de la Luzerne and Mons. de Marbois had originally come here — I do assure you that it would greatly have benefitted the cause of the Alliance and the United States. Such scenes of wicked intrigue have been exhibited as I never expected would take place in America, until maturity of times and luxury with its concomitant train of vices had ripened us for destruction. You will no doubt be fully informed by others concerning the proceedings of a faction dangerous to our country and very disgraceful also. October 13 1779. I had written thus far and stopped, having no opportunity of immediate conveyance, when my friends from Philadelphia informed me of the crowning work of more than a year's intrigue — that malice is at last glutted even to satiety — it seems however, that the party have been under the necessity of suffering one proper man to be employed, and I am well pleased to see, even the wicked sometimes compelled to do right. I heartily wish you success in your negotiation, and that when you secure one valuable point for us (the fishery) that you will not less exert yourself for another very important object, the free navigation of Mississippi, provided guilty Britain should remain in possession of the Floridas? I totally despair of the navigation from any other advocacy. Before this reaches Boston you will no doubt have heard of Count d'Estaing's arrival on our coast. Should fortune favor us, with this aid we may expect to remove our unprincipled enemies from N. York & R. Island — To this if we can add Nova Scotia, we may be pretty indifferent about the future operations of Great Britain. I shall be at all times happy to hear from you, and in return will furnish you with such intelligence as this part of the world produces.

With singular esteem and affection I am dear Sir  
most sincerely yours.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY October 13. 1779

DEAR SIR,

I am very much obliged to you for your favor of the 28 of September and for the trouble you took in writing a copy of the letter I wrote to you by M<sup>r</sup> Ford. I was well apprized that nothing *in it which is mine* could be made an ill use of, but to remedy this, something not mine, and not in the letter, is substituted for the purpose of misrepresentation. As thus — that “R. H. Lee had written to the Governor of Virginia that Mons<sup>r</sup> Gerard was recalled because he opposed D<sup>r</sup> Lee” — My expression is “the latter (Gerard) being recalled — it is supposed for his factious support of Deane here” A very proper reason too, and which I verily believe to be true, and which would be as true altho D<sup>r</sup> Lee existed not. it is [s]ufficient that there is no such thing, as is asserted, in my letter, and it [s]erves further to shew that a certain Set neither regard truth or any thing else when opposed to their calumnious bad designs. I beg your pardon my dear Sir for having given you a moments trouble on this occasion, I did not mean to do so, my design was only to prevent in future this mode of misrepresentation, and it is effectually done by your information that writing “private” on the letters intended to be so, would prevent public inspection.

I hope when the Assembly is preparing a system of law for [o]ur future felicity, that they will not neglect that noble and best foundation for public liberty, general diffusion of knowledge for which you had left with the House so excellent a System. By the last post [I] am informed from Congress that an Embarkation of

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 9.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Troops from N. York had taken [p]lace with Teams &c<sup>e</sup> supposed for a secret Southern expedition — In the [l]ast Baltimore paper it is said, that a Fleet for the Southward with Troops [h]as returned to N. York — I took this account to mean the embarkation mentioned to me from Congress, and that if they had put back, it was in consequence of hearing that Count D'Esteing was upon the Coast — I am satisfied that nothing else but his being here will prevent our being visited this Fall by these Devils (for I can call by no other name Men desperate in evil) from N. York. I wish we were better prepared to meet them. M<sup>r</sup> Le Maire told me that there were 8000 stands of Arms belonging to our State in Nantes. They would be a glorious acquisition if we had them — There is already one Continental frigate in France (the Alliance) another (the Confederacy) will soon be there, would it not be possible to obtain from Congress an order that one or both of these frigates should bring these arms over and to Virginia? Such is the tardiness of people to engage in the Military that we have yet obtained but two men in Westmoreland upon both the acts “for raising a body of Troops &c<sup>e</sup>” and that “concerning Officers, Soldiers, Sailors & Marines” — The one obtained under the former law is delivered to me and I have prevailed with a Man to find him rations 'till further orders — I think there was in the Gazette some time ago an Advertisement from the Board of war mentioning Urbanna as the place of Rendezvous for this County — Would it be proper for me to order these two men there, or wait until we see if more can be obtained? It will be some expence to get the men conveyed thither, and this will be nearly as great for one as for 20. I think that the accession of Spain to our Union must quickly close the Scene with our enemies — 'Tis merry enough to see how the s[c]ene is changed already

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

with them — The British kings proclamation to the Wardens of the Cinque ports to be watchful to drive away the Stocks &c from the Sea coasts as he learns an invasion of the kingdom is meditated —

He begins to taste the unpleasantness of that treatment which he has been so long inflicting upon us.

I have the honor to be with particular esteem dear Sir your affectionate friend.

TO [HENRY LAURENS]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY October the 15<sup>th</sup> 1779

MY DEAR SIR,

I should not so long have denied myself the pleasure of corresponding with you in this way had I not expected daily a more agreeable personal communication of sentiments, and I am the more reconciled to my disappointment by the consideration of your being probably to remain longer in Congress — I thank you Sir for your favor of September the 28<sup>th</sup>, which by an interruption of the post I did not receive until 4 days ago. It seems that the Rider between Leeds and Fredericksburg is stopped because the postmaster at the former place is two quarters in arrear to the Rider and he has written to Philadelphia upon the subject, but can get neither letter nor money in answer — Will you be pleased Sir to speak to M<sup>r</sup> Baynton and M<sup>r</sup> Hazard about this that I may again have the pleasure of corresponding with my friends. It is true that this route, altho it communicates between three of our trading towns does not now pay the expences of the Rider &c but is this not the case with almost every

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 16. Endorsed, “Rec<sup>d</sup> by Col<sup>o</sup> Loyaute the 26<sup>th</sup>/answ<sup>d</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Novem — —”

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

post in the United States? When others become valuable by the restoration of peace and commerce this will also, and in the mean time the Post is an expence defrayed by all the Citizens of the United States, and it is not fair that so many as live in the lower parts of the Northern Neck should be deprived of its benefits. Whilst many of the States send to Congress such stuff as they do, I shall despair of se[e]ing virtue encouraged and protected, or vice frowned upon and punished, it is therefore Sir that I think the report that you have with great justice proposed in Deanes case will stand a poor chance of being adopted — However, individual, if not congressional honor, may be saved by taking the yeas & nays on the question. I have received many messages from M<sup>r</sup> Cabell about the depositions that he sent so long since as last december concerning a M<sup>r</sup> Penns misconduct in public trust. M<sup>r</sup> Cabell is a very honest, worthy country gentleman, and having no conception that Congress can ballance a moment about reprehending the misconduct of their immediate servants, he may conjecture illy concerning the manner in which I have acted with those papers. Is it impossible Sir that Congress should censure offence or Offenders of any kind? — I judge of the contents of those papers which your honor prohibited you from sending, since a M<sup>r</sup> Francis (agent for Beaumerchais) has informed Williamsburg that D<sup>r</sup> Lee is —— and that Jay is to go Minister to Spain — The party, glutted even to satiety with revenge, have vomited those things which the hushing dose of honor could not keep down — It is really a very laughable business this obligation of honor as used in Congress, for generally the very men impose it who resolve to disregard it, and use it to restrain the virtuous, whilst the wicked ones communicate as they please, and in such a manner as to do ten times more public injury

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that [than] the most<sup>1</sup> unreserved publication would do. In short I believe our affairs will not go on well until the plotting secret Divan is converted into an open Assembly of the peoples representatives. It was a thing of too much moment for the whole race of Defaulters & Plunderers,<sup>2</sup> not to be told that Congress had by their treatment of one man given the most instructive lesson to all the public servants in their power, that the faithful discharge of duty and presuming to complain of public peculation, were not to be admitted in a Congressional servant, but surely to draw after them ruin & disgrace. 'Tis therefore that the news flies on Eagles wings to the remotest<sup>3</sup> parts where the business of Congress is transacted — There is one comfort in all this, which is, that when things get to their worst they must mend — that Crisis is now at hand, and therefore we may hope that the Navigation of Mississippi, the subsidy from Spain and the most faithful application of the money, the fisheries, and every other good will result from the late Manoeuvres<sup>2</sup> — One thing more is necessary to be done, it is to take, in a whisper, M<sup>r</sup> Deanes nomination of the person or persons who is to settle his accounts for the expenditure of 3 millions — whence will result the clearest proof that it is not necessary to order in the most peremptory manner that all the moneys borrowed<sup>4</sup> in Europe shall be immediately placed in the hands of a most approved Banker and not one livre of it to be touched but by draught of Congress, and the Banker to send quarterly accounts to Congress of the state of their bank, always paying the usual interest where money lays uncalled for. I say that a judicious well chosen Denean would, by settling M<sup>r</sup> Deanes accounts

<sup>1</sup> The word "most" is inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> Blotted.

<sup>3</sup> Torn.

<sup>4</sup> Substituted for "Coll."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

prove this to be unnecessary — but Sir, until this is done, will it not be wise, considering how experience points, to adopt this precaution — especially as our holy religion teaches us to pray “Lead us not into temptation.” I had almost forgot to mention how very important it is to select most wise and virtuous men as Secretaries to the Embassies — I think you have had experience of one or two in Congress who have displayed such<sup>1</sup> integrity, candor and disinterestedness that it will be st[ra]nge if you do not force these appointments upon them.

Until I hear that the Leeds rider is restored, be pleased Sir to direct your letters for me to the care of James Hunter Esq<sup>r</sup> near Fredericksburg — Certain intelligence that a fleet of 30 large Ships has entered & anchored within Chesapeake Bay — it was not known what they were when my letter came from Williamsburg —

I am with the sincerest esteem and affection my dear Sir Your much obliged and obedient servant.

TO JAMES SEARLE<sup>3</sup>

CHANTILLY October 15. 1779

DEAR SIR

Since I was favored with yours of August the 20<sup>th</sup> which I fully answered by the return of post, I have not had the pleasure of a line from you. I now take the liberty of enclosing you by Col<sup>o</sup> Loyeauté all the tickets that we had in the second class of the Continental lottery. Among these you will find the fortu-

<sup>1</sup> Torn.

<sup>2</sup> Blotted.

<sup>3</sup> A.L.S. Haverford College Library, Charles Roberts Autograph Collection. Addressed to him as “Member of Cong. / at / Philadelphia” and sent by Colonel Loyeauté.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

nate numbers of 91,315 & 89,638 which are 500 dollar prizes each; also 64,510 which is a thirty dollar prize. Let me now beg the favor of you to take out new tickets for me in the third class to the full amount of both these prizes of 500 dollars agreeable to the list sent in my letter of August the 7<sup>th</sup> last past which list is herein again repeated to wit

	Tickets	dollars
R. H. Lee & Co . . . . .	3	90
Annie Lee & Co . . . . .	3	90
Mary Lee & Co . . . . .	1	30
Mary Lee in her own right . . .	15	450
Hannah Lee & Co . . . . .	1	30
Hannah Lee in her own right . .	2	60
Nancy Lee & Co . . . . .	3	90
Nancy Lees former ticket continued	1	30
Harriot Lee & Co . . . . .	3	90
Sally Lee & Co. . . . .	<u>3</u>	<u>90</u>
	35	1050

	dollars
2 500 dollar prizes is . . . . .	1000
1 thirty dollar prize . . . . .	30
D <sup>r</sup> Shippen Sen <sup>r</sup> for } . . . . .	20
20 dollars	<u>20</u>
	1050

With respect to the new numbers I am indifferent whether they be the same or new ones. Be pleased Sir to give the Tickets when taken out to D<sup>r</sup> Shippen the elder to be transmitted by some safe hand to me — In the meantime I will thank you for a copy of the Numbers by post directing your letter for me to the care of James Hunter esquire near Fredericksburg in Virginia — You have been so kind as already to undertake this business for me, therefore I need not now

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

apologize for giving you the trouble—I hope you will soon have the Count D’Estaing at N. York & R. Island, and that by our joint aid we may remove our enemies from those strongholds—I think that Congress have by their treatment of D<sup>r</sup> Lee given a very instructive lesson to future Ministers—that zeal, ability, and integrity are qualities which they do not intend their servants shall practise without incurring their utmost displeasure. I must confess that I feel myself compelled to entertain a bad opinion of any man who will serve Congress while such sentiments are suffered to exist in that body. I rejoice with you Sir in the success of our cruise against the Jamaica fleet—What say now the most sagacious politicians who were for totally laying aside our Navy! This is of apiece with the rest of their wisdom, and their treatment of D<sup>r</sup> Lee & Deane shews their profound attachment to justice and detestation of Knavery—It will give me very great pleasure to hear that M<sup>rs</sup> Searle has benefitted by her trip to the seashore—I am dear Sir very sincerely your friend and humble Servant.

TO [NATHANIEL SCUDDER]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY<sup>2</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 23 1779

DEAR SIR,

I regret extremely, as well on public as on private account, that concurrence of accidents which has hitherto prevented, and will for sometime prevent me from seeing and conversing with you—I had intended myself this pleasure at your own house in September, and since at Williamsburg but have not been able yet

<sup>1</sup> A. dr. L. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, reverse of No. 329. Scudder was a delegate to Congress from New Jersey.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “Menokin” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

to accomplish my wishes.<sup>1</sup> I am well aware that the present state of our affairs is distressing, and that the wisest are puzzled to point the way to relief. In this state of affairs, we know that the human mind is most liable to adopt systems without due examination Systems<sup>2</sup> w<sup>h</sup> may indeed be productive of much private emolument, but with certain public injury. If our affairs are badly situated, they demand the strongest exertions of wisdom & virtue to rectify them, and with care to avoid whatever may increase the evil. Great as is our debt, it has hitherto been our happiness & our safety, that this debt (a very inconsiderable part excepted) is due to our own Citizens — In most urgent situations, certainly foreign loans may and must be attempted, but reason and experience prove that these had better be obtained from Republics, than from Monarchies — The former are more apt to *negotiate* differences, and patiently to expect satisfaction by peaceable means — The latter with strong and quick hand to secure what they claim. Of the two Creditors every wise man w<sup>d</sup> choose the former. It does not lessen the danger because the contract is with Individuals of a foreign state, for<sup>3</sup> the government may<sup>4</sup> truly say that the subject has a right to demand the protection of the State<sup>5</sup> in just claims, and that a Contract with our Assembly being a contract with Government, justice cannot be obtained in Courts of law but must be sought for thro the medium of power —

<sup>1</sup> The following sentence is here erased : “ A gentleman of worth and understanding lately from Williamsburg has informed of a plan projected below and exhibited with much affectation of wisdom, gravity, and [*illegible*] which plan as it is understood here hath given great uneasiness to good men.”

<sup>2</sup> The word “ Systems ” is inserted above the line.

<sup>3</sup> Substituted for “ because ” erased.

<sup>4</sup> Substituted for “ will ” erased.

<sup>5</sup> Substituted for “ government ” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

This is an awful consideration and demands our most serious attention<sup>1</sup> before we adopt engagements that may involve the most pernicious consequences—If I am not misinformed, there is now a letter shewing in Town from Mr. Beaumarchais which contains passages strongly corroborating this doctrine as I understand that Gentleman threatens in high tone to seize American Vessels if the demand he makes against the United States is not quickly<sup>2</sup> paid. I will not now go into the nature of that demand, but I possess irrefragable documents to shew it in its true light. This instance is adduced to prove<sup>3</sup> in what manner our<sup>4</sup> Country may be exposed to the most dangerous insults by inconsiderate engagements. I enclose you a paper concerning Mr. Beaumarchais<sup>5</sup> with this short observation—Mr. Williams is in known connection with some of<sup>6</sup> those who promote Mr. Beaumarchais views, which gives great force to his accounts of that person, and Mons<sup>r</sup> Montaudinne is known to be a Merchant of the first respectability in every point of view—Perhaps you may draw some lights from the inclosed reflections upon a Contract now existing with the Famous General—And I pray you to preserve the paper for me, as I have no duplicate of it. Every schoolboy can state a debt, and the annual payments necessary for its extinction, but an able Financier alone can point out resources that are adequate, that are most easy, and that consequently will be paid with the greatest certainty. Heaven would bestow a great favor upon us by furnishing this Country with such a Man, and Hell

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “consideration” erased.

<sup>2</sup> The word “quickly” is inserted above the line.

<sup>3</sup> Substituted for “show” erased.

<sup>4</sup> Substituted for “this” erased.

<sup>5</sup> The words “which may further render” are here erased.

<sup>6</sup> The words “some of” are inserted above the line.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

a certain curse by pulling one forward <sup>1</sup> who should, on principles of private gain avail himself of the present distress to procure the adoption of measures that may hereafter plunge the community into the most fatal mischiefs.<sup>2</sup> It has never lain in my way to search deeply into the learning of finance, perhaps there are none here who have done so. Being lately in conversation with a very sensible gentleman, he <sup>3</sup> supposed that good effects might flow from calling in all the Plate in this State and paying interest to the Proprietors of it — To lodge this in the Treasury<sup>4</sup>

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON?]<sup>5</sup>

FALMOUTH 1<sup>st</sup> dec<sup>r</sup> 1779

DEAR SIR,

Being thus far on my way up the country I have received a letter by post from Phil<sup>a</sup>, in which a Member of Congress thus expresses himself “there is undoubtedly a capital embarkation on foot (meaning from N. York) I fear for Savannah, Charles Town, *or your Neighborhood*.” I could not omit giving you this intelligence, that with<sup>t</sup> alarming, measures may be taken to prevent injurious surprize, and to be in the best possible posture to prevent insult — I have always been of opinion that if part of the french fleet did not winter here that our enemies, rather than remain inactive at N. York this winter, would attempt

<sup>1</sup> The phrase “(if any such there sh<sup>d</sup> be)” is written above the line and erased.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “consequences” erased.

<sup>3</sup> The words “he suggested to me the consideration of” are here erased.

<sup>4</sup> The Ms. ends here with the page.

<sup>5</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 31.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

something Southward, in order to get a better peac[e,] if peace was their object, or if war was their design, to raise the national pulse by some successful stroke — Since the evacuation of R. Island, I understand the whole force at N. York to be between 12 & 16 thousand men — Of these they may spare 6000 to try experiments —

I am dear Sir sincerely yours.

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGA Jan<sup>y</sup> 18. 1780

MY DEAR FRIEND

I send you the inclosed pamphlet,<sup>2</sup> not to give you any information, or to remove any doubts that you can be supposed to have, or to fix in your mind a greater detestation of those wicked men, whose base arts we have long seen and much lamented; but that you may see a necessary step hath been taken here to disabuse the generality of mankind. The printer hath done his part most vilely, but you will correct his errors as you read, and I hope you will approve the caution of not inserting such things, as if made public, might offend our friends among the great in Europe. This omission has rendered the refutation less complete, but there is enough to carry conviction to every candid mind.

The faction have however gained their point of removing the man they feared and hated — some of them are above the apprehension of disgrace, and some

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Lee had five hundred copies of his brother Arthur Lee's letter of February 10, 1779, to Congress, answering Silas Deane, printed and distributed in America. See *post*, letter of April 24, 1780, to Arthur Lee.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

are below it. S. Deane has avoided the consequences of a suit brot against him in Philadelphia by Dr Lee, and has fled to France, upon discovering that the want of fixed damages in an action of slander will prevent Bail from being accountable. This pamphlet has given me information in one point, wherein I own that I was before deceived — I mean concerning Berkenhouts mission — The artful knave had imposed on me a belief that he came here with a view to seek a convenient settlement for himself and his family in a land of liberty — I was taken with the generous sentiment — his tale was plain & probable — I knew he had been in the esteem of my brother, and to rivet the whole his pamphlet was delivered, contending with good force for the independence of our country. But however guilty the man realy was, this not appearing, the Magistrate of a free State should say ; *de non apparentibus, et non existentibus, eadem est ratio.* Whigs always let proof precede punishment but the Tories have usually substituted imagination for proof and excess of punishment for that degree of it which is necessary only for prevention & example. This mission however proves to what extremity of folly the extreme of wickedness will carry men. No man with his heart and head properly regulated, could, or can devise a color of substantial good that would possibly flow from such a mission, at such a time, and in such a state of things. It is then no wonder that where other things conspired to induce a belief of good-sense and goodness in a man, that it was not presently suspected that he was come upon an errand compounded of folly and knavery. I may be mistaken, but I have long thought that I saw in this whole Denean faction the foul finger of British politics — I make no doubt but that it was contrived by Paul Wentworth at Paris, and that Deane knew perfectly what this State Doctor was at the moment that he

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

arrived<sup>1</sup> in Philadelphia — His silence at the time, the knowledge he confesses that he had, and the use that he made of this Phenomenon after it disappeared, all conspire to place Deane near the bottom of the System, after taking into the account the conferences that he held with Paul Wentworth before he left Paris. The thing itself too, seems to be confounded of Scottish fraud and the peculiar character of Deane for st[r]atagem and wickedness — These base arts have here however answer'd the little business to our enemies of gratifying their revenge on two men who have with invariable zeal and good success opposed their system for enslaving America — And the Deneans or Commercial plunderers have obtained their point of removing the capital obstructions to their views of public rapine. I write this letter under a fit of the gout, & now affection for my friend supports me as well when writing to you, as pride formerly did the Stoic philosopher when disregarding the gouty pain he conversed with a great man of Antiquity — Indeed when I write to you, I seem as it were to be present with you and giving free scope to my mind, I restrain none of its operations — Policy may seem to forbid this in a letter that is to travel so far, but being satisfied that my sentiments of men and measures are justly founded, I am not apprehensive of ill consequences from impertinent curiosity. After a relaxation of 11 months, I think of returning to public business next spring by going into our New Assembly, for I shall continue to think in the American cause, that “Nothing is done whilst any thing remains to be done” I expect that the hard Winter has saved us the trouble and expence of meeting Gen. Clinton in the field, which we have been taught to expect without fail, and for which purpose one third of our Militia are in readiness. I grieve

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “was” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

exceedingly for the poor of Boston in this rigorous Season and would willingly spare them part of my abundance of fuel if I could contrive it to them — I thank you Sir for your civility to M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee — he is the son of my old friend some years ago deceased — the youth was my Ward and went many years ago to England for education under the care of his Uncle Fairfax.

I expect my brother D<sup>r</sup> Lee with my Son will do themselves the honor of visiting you in the Spring in their way home from France. The pamphlet inclosed, if you approve, you will shew to such worthy Men in Boston as you choose.

I have sent one to M<sup>r</sup> Hancock and one to M<sup>r</sup> R. T. Paine as Members of Congress with whom I have long served —

M<sup>rs</sup> Lee joins me in presenting best respects to M<sup>rs</sup> Adams and wishing you both most cordially the return of many happy years. It will make me happy at all times to hear from you, and it will be very agreeable to be informed of any interesting news whether foreign or domestic — You live in the high road of intelligence, and I am situated in a very retired spot. The post comes pretty regularly as usual to Leeds Town (in the County of Westmoreland) where I send for letters<sup>1</sup> constantly.

Farewell my dear Friend.

P.S. My little Son of 5 months old, whom I have christened Cassius, grows apace, & seems already to *look* as if he would be no Lover of Tyrants —

I shall be glad to know if you continue in Congress and if so, when you propose visiting Philadelphia?

<sup>1</sup> Illegible erasure.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO GOVERNOR [JONATHAN] TRUMBULL<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA Jany. 22d. 1780

SIR,

Altho I am fully satisfied that your wisdom and goodness were incapable of being imposed on by the Libel published at Philadelphia on the 5<sup>th</sup> of december 1778, yet you may not have imagined that it was so completely groundless, nay, that the Libellers (for there were more than one concerned in this wicked business) were themselves practicing the very vices that they charged upon others. When your leisure permits you to read the pamphlet<sup>2</sup> which I have the honor to enclose you, you will be surprised and concerned that such principles should have found their way into the breasts of our young Republicans, where Virtue as the great Essential, should be the prime Mover! And your wonder will increase when I assure you that these materials more dilated, and full to the purpose, with most authentic documents to vouch every part of them, were all in the possession of Congress at the moment that they rewarded the Libeller and dishonored as much as they could the Man whose fame had been already injured by a cabal for diligently adhering to the honest duties of his station! These things should satisfy every State how very considerate they ought to be in their choice of Members of Congress — When once the Great Council of America shall dwindle into a factious herd, and become the Abettors of Vice, it will be time to look seriously into our affairs.

The printer of this little work has made many mistakes which your good sense will correct as you read.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Massachusetts Historical Society, Letters and Papers, 1777-1780, p. 146. Governor of Connecticut.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 168, note 2, above.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

It will give me pleasure to know that this letter with its enclosure hath got safely to your hand; for which purpose a line directed to the care of the Post Master at Leeds Town in Westmoreland County Virginia will come safely.

I have the honor to be with the highest respect and esteem Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO ROGER SHERMAN<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA Jany. 22. 1780

DEAR SIR,

The very high sense that I entertain of your sound and virtuous patriotism will by no means suffer me to pass you by when I am distributing a pamphlet<sup>2</sup> which I think it imports the friends of America to know the contents of. I apprehend that the faction in Congress would long since have made the most essential parts public, had not concealment been necessary to cover their own misdeeds. It was certainly due to the honor of Congress as well as to that of Individuals, that the public should be disabused in points of great moment wherein they had been most boldly and wickedly misled.

You may observe Sir that I have taken care to omit such parts, as would if published, have tended to offend States that are now friendly to us. These things would have rendered the work much more complete to prove the vileness of that libel published on the 5<sup>th</sup> of december 1778, but I am sure there is no person injured by that, but who would rather choose to

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Massachusetts Historical Society, Letters and Papers, 1777-1780, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Lee's letter of February 10, 1779, to Congress in answer to Silas Deane's accusations. See p. 168, note 2, above.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

continue suffering such injury than to expose it by means that would be hurtful to the Community.

It gave me great concern my friend to hear that you are not in Congress. I lament for the public good which I am sure is injured thereby. My mistake is great indeed if there ever was a time when more wisdom and virtue were wanting in the Great Council of America. I hope dear Sir that it will not be long before you are again restored to that Assembly. Be so kind as present my best respects to Mr. Hosmer and Mr. Ellsworth and let them have the reading of this pamphlet.

It will give me pleasure to know that this letter with its enclosure has reached you safely — for this purpose a line directed for me to the care of the Post Master at Leeds Town in Westmoreland County Virginia will find me.

I am dear Sir, with high esteem and great affection,  
most sincerely yours.

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY Feby 7<sup>th</sup> 1780

DEAR SIR,

I am much obliged to you for your favor of January the 2<sup>d</sup> with its enclosures which came to hand two days ago, kept back I suppose by the post. The Bearer who is Under Sherif of our county, will receive and bring me the Registers you are pleased to mention. A variety of preventions have concurred to delay my trip to Williamsburg, but I yet hope to have the pleasure of seeing you when the gout and weather will permit. I thank you Sir for your hint concerning

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 2, Vol. 51, No. 10.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Richmond, it will confirm a preconceived design I had of writing in time to secure lodging, as I do intend to go into the next Assembly. I hope the southern news is true, for such is the pride and obstinacy of our enemies that nothing but sound drubbing seems likely to bring them to reason. I have a letter from D<sup>r</sup> Lee dated 28 Sept<sup>r</sup>: "The combined fleets of France & Spain will soon go out again, & as M. D'Orvilliers is dismissed from the command for M. Duchaffault, a more fighting Admiral is in his place, it is expected we shall have a better account of the English fleet this cruise, than the former" — by this I should conjecture that the combined fleets had returned to port without coming to action with the enemy & by extracts from the english papers, it would appear that S<sup>r</sup> Charles Hardy is vindicating himself to the nation for flying from the combined fleets, by pleading his orders — perha[ps]<sup>1</sup> the British fled, and the Allies did not press upon them with approved vigor. My brother says, that "as he stands pledged for 300,000 livres for the State of Virginia, he is in doubt whether he will be permitted to come away 'till that is paid". I hope Sir, that this business will not be suffered to add to the other pers[e]cutions of that ill-used gentleman!

I am, with much esteem and regard, dear Sir  
your friend & Servant.

TO [ARTHUR LEE]<sup>2</sup>

[DEAR BROTHER?]

April 24<sup>th</sup> 1780

It being very uncertain whether this letter will reach Europe before you have quitted it will prevent me from writing so fully as I would otherwise do — Yet

<sup>1</sup> Concealed by binding.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. Harvard University Library, Lee Mss., VII. 17.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I foresee the letter will not be a short one upon the idea that you may possibly not be come away — The bearer of this is George Mason, Esq. eldest son of Col<sup>o</sup> George Mason, whose good sense and friendship for the family renders him worthy of esteem. The young gentleman had intended for France last year but was disappointed — The same reason induces him to make a second effort, hope of reestablishing his health by the Sea air and the fostering climate either of Italy or the South of France, as you shall advise him is most salutary for relieving him from the consequences of a severe chronic Rheumatism — I have no doubt but that you will give Mr. Mason every friendly assistance in your power.

Your letters of August 21-17 & 28 of September I have received with the enclosures in that of the 17<sup>th</sup>, since the receipt of which the Assembly of this State has not met — they will do so in a week from this time, when the friends of you and their country will be consulted concerning the propriety of presenting your Memorial, and measures pursued accordingly. I have much pleasure in assuring you that my informations from many parts of the United States confirm that Deane & his Abettors are fallen into universal contempt and reprobation. For my part I believe a wickeder set never sprung from the corrupt compost of avarice, ambition, envy and fraud. I caused 500 copies of your letter to Congress dated Feb. 10-1779 answering Deanes Libel to be published and dispersed thro North America, leaving out such parts as might offend by communicating the secrets of Courts friendly to America<sup>1</sup> — this I am sure your patriotism will approve, altho such withholdings prevented your merit from being so fully displaied — This publication has had every good effect that could be wished —

<sup>1</sup> Written in cipher.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

When you arrive in America you may find it necessary to prevent further injuries to your country by some nefarious possessor of<sup>1</sup> to open public men and their measures more fully to the community, as fully as may consist with Union the great principle of our Countries safety. Deane was arrested in Philadelphia at your suit in an action of slander damage £200,000 — he gave appearance bail, but as the law would not compel special bail in such actions, he has made his escape before judgement — So that now he may not be found to answer the damages that may be awarded. I formerly proposed to you that it would be very proper for you in your way to Congress to pass if possible thro New hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island & Connecticut, there to visit Gen. Whipple, Mr. Sam. Adams, Gen. Warren, M<sup>r</sup> Ellery & M<sup>r</sup> Merchant, and Governor Trumbull, with many other virtuous friends of their country and you — I still hope you may do so. Our worthy & learned friend, Geo. Wythe esquire is now Professor of Law in W<sup>m</sup> & Mary College — his lectures are greatly admired, and it deserves your consideration whether your nephew Ludwell would not be greatly benefitted by attending his lectures whilst he is reading the laws of Virginia and getting a competent knowledge of the Attorney's practise — his father thinks so and if you approve it & can spare him, he may come presently here for the above purpose. There is now a fine opening for Able Lawyers at the Gen. Court Bar, and the sooner the [he] commences with propriety the better. Your friends think that Boston or Philadelphia will be the best Theatres for the display of your Law powers. They are certainly much superior places to this country in that Line. After the very ungrateful treatment<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Several words in cipher here follow.

<sup>2</sup> The remainder of the manuscript is missing.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [DOCTOR WILLIAM SHIPPEN, JR.]<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND. May 7<sup>th</sup> 1780.

MY DEAR SIR.

I arrived here six days ago, to give my attendance as a member of this present General Assembly, and here I received your favor of Ap<sup>l</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> <sup>2</sup> on the 5<sup>th</sup> Instant, for which be pleased to accept my thanks. You ask, must the wicked enemies of our Country still prosper and go unpunished? I answer they probably will, untill virtue learns to be as industrious as vice, and men in general come to prize the former more than the latter. The stimulated industry that marks your persecutor strongly demonstrates, that some other quality than mere virtue influences his conduct. The bitterness of revenge, working on disappointed ambition and avarice, is plainly perceptible at this distance of time. I cannot recollect the particular Complainants against D<sup>r</sup> Morgan out of Congress; but I remember perfectly well, that in Congress M<sup>r</sup> Chace did most warmly oppose D<sup>r</sup> Morgan's longer continuance in the Directorship, saying repeatedly, that not a Soldier would be obtained from Maryland, if the director was not changed. I remember M<sup>r</sup> Chace, his mentioning particular instances of his misconduct which appeared strong at the time. I make no doubt but that you may get the information you want from M<sup>r</sup> Chace, and be availed also by his testimony. If there were any written complaints they no doubt may be found upon the files of Congress.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Transcripts, III. See *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 166, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Shippen wrote to Lee for evidence to disprove allegations of Dr. Morgan that he had sought to displace Morgan as Director General. See a printed text of Shippen's letter in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, May, 1860, p. 344.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Having had the pleasure of a great share of your confidence and correspondence, and having been a member of Congress at the time, it seems more than probable that if you had excited clamors against the Director, with a view to succeed him, that I should have heard or known something about it, and yet<sup>1</sup> I can declare before God and Man, that I neither knew or heard of any such thing.<sup>2</sup> I believe there is scarcely a gentleman who was then a member of Congress, who does not well remember, how great and general the dissatisfaction was at that time, against the Director General; insomuch that I solemnly affirm, it appeared to me, as I know it did to many others, that the change in the Directorship, was indispensable to the collecting of another army; — the former having been chiefly disban[d]ed in the fall of 1776. It appears to me a new mode of Judicial proceeding for the prosecutor to be the evidence taker, — altho' the defendant be present. Because if they differ concerning the propriety of any insertion, who is to determine? or is either of the parties to determine for himself against the other? In such a case an individual, whether he was able or otherwise, must be considered as an atom compared with N. America, the safety of which depended absolutely on an army, and one speedily obtained. I heartily wish you a successful discharge [?] from persecution, as I do most firmly believe that your services have greatly availed the public. I am once more engaged in the busy scene of politics. Col. Frank too is elected both for our Senate and House of Delegates; he is not yet here, but will be in a few days.

<sup>1</sup> The word "yet" is written above the line in pencil.

<sup>2</sup> The following sentence is here erased; "I well know that before Dr Morgan's appointment to the Directorship, you expressed yourself against undertaking the Office, and that it plainly appeared to Congress."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

My best love attends M<sup>rs</sup> Shippen and my cousins. Whatever letters you favor me with after 15<sup>th</sup> June next, must not be directed to this place, but as usual to Chantilly. I am yours, my Dear Sir, most sincerely and affectionately,

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND IN VIRGINIA May 16. 1780

MY DEAR SIR,

I arrived here on the first of this month a member of our general Assembly, and at this place was honored with your favor of the 5<sup>th</sup> instant which is the only one that I have received since we parted. To you I should most certainly have paid my respects very frequently if I had not believed that you had sailed for the West Indies in your way to Europe. the account you have favored me with of the southern operations is the only full and sensible one that I have seen—it is to be lamented that our intelligence from Charles Town is so irregular, slow, and uncertain. I do greatly lament the loss of Col<sup>o</sup> Parker both for public and private reasons. nor am I in the least surprised at your feelings for the consequences of things in the South, you who have so many more powerful reasons than I have, when myself have felt so much anxiety for the fate of Charles Town and its brave garrison. In ten minutes after our House was formed (which unfortunately was not until the 9<sup>th</sup>) I moved for a bill to embody militia for the relief of S. carolina, and one will pass to morrow for sending with all possible expedition 2500 men to your assistance. we have given such large pay in tobacco, and other encouragements, that I hope the

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 17. Addressed to him “at Wilmington, in North Carolina.”

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

number will soon be obtained, and they are to go on as fast as a Battalion is collected. should they not come in time to save Ch. Town, which yet I hope, they may be in time, with others to controul the further operations of the enemy. The Maryland line of Continental troops is coming on and part are already arrived at Petersburg where our government has been making every necessary exertion to facilitate their speedy progress to the Scene of action. Col<sup>o</sup> Porterfield with our last State regiment, about 500 men, and Maj<sup>t</sup> Nelson with 60 horse left Petersburg about 10 days ago for Ch. Town, and at the same time went on from thence Col<sup>o</sup> Armand with his Corps. We have about 300 good men remaining at Williamsburg who will march South in a day or two — yesterday our house voted that the Governor should spare all the Arms from our Stores that could be done, and this was done in consequence of a requisition from N. Carolina for Arms to put into the hands of their Militia. By this the Governor is authorised to supply the Arms wanted in N. Carolina which I think he will immediately do, and leave us enough to arm the Militia going south and yet to provide our Eastern frontier with proper defence which is next to the relief of Charles Town<sup>1</sup> our diligent object. To this is to be added that our enemies are now stimulating an active war upon our Western frontier which calls for immediate defence, and which prevents so full and strong aid as our wishes incline us to, from being sent to S. Carolina; and which<sup>2</sup> I hope will prevent our sister state from thinking that we have been unwilling to give them more powerful support — The truth is that we have, and that we mean to furnish every assistance in our power — We shall probably continue sitting here until

<sup>1</sup> An illegible word is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> The words “in good se[as]on” are here erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the middle of June and I shall be very thankful to you for frequent information of the progress, and as you conceive, of the designs of the enemy. I lodge in the house with a few good whigs, among whom is M<sup>r</sup> Page; heretofore a member of Congress, who particularly desires to be remembered to you — The Marquis Fayette is arrived at Boston certainly, and thence I suppose that our Ally means some active operation on this quarter — perhaps you may have heard the report that a french squadron was expected at N. York. Gerard & Jay have arrived thro much peril of storms at [and] tempest at length in France.

I pray you Sir to believe that I have the highest friendship and esteem for you, and that I am with the greatest respect most sincerely and affectionately yours

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

VIRGINIA. May the 17th 1780

MY DEAR SIR.

I should have paid my respects to you before now had I known where to have directed my letters, for at this time I have no other method than to inclose the present to our friend Mr Lovell at Philadelphia, who I trust will know the best manner of conveying it. The enemy appear to have abated very little of their pride; however much their power may be lessened. It may be expected nevertheless that the former will shortly be compelled to yield to the very great abatement of the latter, and therefore that you will next winter have something to do in execution of your commission. It would seem by the present manœuvres

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Adams Papers. Copy from the original supplied through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of the enemy, that they mean to possess themselves of as many strongholds in different States as they can in order to go full handed to a treaty. with this view they are now making great efforts for Charlestown in South Carolina, and our Portsmouth in this State is next threatened. We are now opposing them at Charlestown with great vigor, and we shall endeavor to disappoint their views upon us, but the events of war are uncertain — from the number and spirit of our troops at Charlestown I am persuaded that they will not get the place, but at a very great expense of blood — it is strongly fortified and powerfully protected. Our foes indeed, have great advantage in their command of the sea, as they can with canvas wings fly swiftly from place to place with success, whilst great delays on our part do necessarily arise from long marches thro' this wide extended continent. A few Line of Battle Ships would do unspeakable good. Should the fate of war give them Portsmouth in this State, I think that the powers of Europe that wish our independence on commercial principles will not agree that they shall continue in that possession after a peace, as it will effectually command the entrance into Chesapeake Bay and controul the commerce of the two only tobacco producing States, Virginia and Maryland. the small quantity of Tobacco that grows in North Carolina, and indeed a great part of their commerce in other articles passes through the Capes of Virginia. these States are also among the first for their export of wheat, flour, and Indian corn, exclusive of many other articles. It will therefore be indispensable to the freedom of this commerce that the British possess not Portsmouth altho' the chance of war should put it accidentally into their hands. Delegates from Georgia have lately passed thro this State to Congress from whom we learn that the enemy possess only Savannah

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

and its environs in that State — the independent government being fully exercised in other parts of that country. There will be a general effort this summer to restore our money to its proper value, which we hope may succeed — the plan recommended by Congress is to call in with taxes April 1781 — 180 millions of dollars, which is to be destroyed and a twentieth part issued in a new kind of paper which is to be funded, redeemable in 6 years with specie; whilst the war is to be chiefly supported by specific aids from every state according to its produce and commercial ability, this would seem to be effectual, if we can come up to such very extensive taxation, for which I believe every nerve will be strained. Col. Francis and myself are recommencing our tour of duty in the Assembly of this our native State. it will make us happy to hear from you whenever it is convenient for you, and it will certainly delight us much to know that you are likely to succeed in your mission. I hope your efforts will not be wanting to secure us the free navigation of Mississippi — I expect much more I own from such efforts than from any other — without this free navigation our vast back country will be so distressed as to lay the foundation of future wars and dissension from the necessity of having an outlet to market. Our State hath already dispossessed the English of their hold on the river Illinois, we have great numbers of people settled on the Ohio, and we are now taking a post at the mouth of that river at its confluence with Mississippi — all these places being within our Charter limits. Remember me with much esteem to my friend Mr Dana. I am dear Sir your most affectionate and obedient Servant.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND May the 29<sup>th</sup> 1780

MY DEAR SIR,

Since my last I have been honored with your favors of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of May. Your kind solicitude for M<sup>r</sup>. Parker does great honor to your philanthropy, and I have not neglected what you so properly suggest in your letter of the 4<sup>th</sup>.

There is no change in things here since I wrote to you by last post, except it be that our Act is sent to the Counties called upon for militia, and I hope the 2500 men will be obtained as soon as the nature of the thing will admit. We have directed an hundred horses to be immediately purchased to mount that number of light dragoon recruits now at Petersburg that they may proceed south, where I fear they are extremely wanted since Col<sup>o</sup>. White's very unlucky affair. Nothing will give us more pleasure at Chantilly than to see you there, so that if you should pass thro Virginia I hope you will not forget us. I do certainly partake much in your good or adverse fortune, and therefore I feel very sensibly for the change wrought in your affairs by the enemy in South Carolina & Georgia, but I assure you that I am not yet without hope that things will<sup>2</sup> be set right in that quarter, altho perhaps not without some loss, yet that it will be by no means so great as<sup>3</sup> present appearances threaten. M<sup>r</sup>. Lovell writes me from Philadelphia on the 15 of this month that the news from France is *very good*, but he does not mention what it is, being I

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 18. Addressed to him "at Wilmington in / North Carolina," and sent by Mr. Pringle.

<sup>2</sup> The word "yet" is here erased.

<sup>3</sup> The word "the" is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

suppose a secret for the present. He also informs that M<sup>r</sup> Izard & D<sup>r</sup> Lee were in Paris feb. 15 — that the former had been to Holland to get a passage to America but was disappointed, and that D<sup>r</sup> Lee was to sail in the Alliance the first of march — probably M<sup>r</sup> Izard will come with him. The first division of Maryl<sup>d</sup> Troops I hear marches to day from Petersburg. I am with great and most affectionate esteem and respect your obliged friend.

It may not be amiss to frank your letter by Post.

P.S. 30 May — An Express from Congress calls upon us for immediate aid to cooperate with a powerful assistance in Ships & Land Army expected every hour from our good Ally to assist in driving the British power from our Union — We are making ready with great diligence & I hope we shall yet have the happiness soon to see our country rid of these hostes humani generis.

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND July the 10<sup>th</sup> 1780

MY DEAR SIR,

We are still detained here, but I hope the Assembly will rise in four or five days — We have *passed* an Act to adopt the resolutions of congress on finance, of the 18 March last when a majority of the States (excluding Georgia & S. Carolina) shall have absolutely *or conditionally* adopted them — so that I consider them as in fact already Adopted in this state — We have a bill under consideration for revising the Tender law,

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 19. Addressed to him as “Member of Congress/at/Philadelphia.” Endorsed, “Recd’ 24<sup>th</sup>” [July]/“Ans<sup>d</sup> 1 Aug’.”



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

and one for giving very ample powers to the executive for drawing out the force and resources of the State during the recess of the general assembly, and we have confirmed the agreement of the commissioners concerning the boundary disputed between this commonwealth and Pennsylvania. A law is also *passed* for permitting our distressed bretheren of S. Carolina and Georgia to bring their Slaves here and to exempt them from tax for a year. Thus amidst many mistakes some good has been done. Our last accounts from the southward inform us that Cornwallis remains at Camden with a post above and below him where he seems to be busied at present in laying up magazines of provision—I suppose to be ready for action when the summer quarters are over—Gen. Gates left this place yesterday afternoon and proposes to proceed without delay to Baron de Kalbs camp, who we understand is now determined to go to Cross Creek, and where G. Gates expects to find him. Gen. Weedon & Col<sup>o</sup> Morgan are coming on—Gen. Gates intends to select a proper Corps for Morgan without delay—it is a wise measure and will probably suppress the enemies ravage with decisive effect notwithstanding they are so strong in horse, for we learn that Tarleton has 700 under his command—Gen. Gates seems to possess a thorough understanding of the business he is going upon, and he is proceeding with a wise and well considered system—if he is properly supported—I have little doubt but that he will restore our affairs in that quarter. I should suppose, from the Resolves of Congress which I have seen, that they mean not to call for men from this State to go North expecting that our efforts this way will be necessary in the South—And this indeed is fact, that all the men we can procure will be required in the South, yet many here suppose that our efforts in this way are to be divided between



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the Northern & Southern Armies—in which case I am inclined to think they will be feeble to both. General Huger of your State had arrived here in his way north; but meeting with Gen. Gates at this place he has returned with him to the southw<sup>d</sup>. I see that the southern military chest must either be supported by this State or not at all—but how shall we do it with an empty Treasury? The resolutions of March 18<sup>th</sup> will not begin to operate here until the last of September at soonest, and no money from taxes will come in before that time—We are then driven by necessity to a new emission—at present we talk of issuing £50,000 to go forth<sup>1</sup> as hard money, or an equivalent thereto at 40 for one to issue as the present money declaring in the latter case that the money issued will be redeemed at 40 for one—our funds will be a hard money tax upon Tobacco exported, upon rum & superfluities imported; and a tax upon windows, with some few others that will render them in the whole ample and sufficient for redeeming the money now to be issued in 5 or 6 years. We have no other possible expedient but this to supply the necessary demands of the southern war. I think that the decided superiority of our Ally in the west indies must presently produce some good effects in that quarter—We do both hunger and thirst after good news, so that if you can favor us with anything of that kind it will be very acceptable. this assembly will rise, and of course we shall return home this week, so that the letters you honor me with hereafter may be directed as formerly via Leeds Town

Present if you please my respects to my Carolina friends.

I am with great affection and regard, dear Sir your obliged friend.

<sup>1</sup> The three preceding letters are written above “issue” erased.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO COLONEL CHILTON<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, July the 18<sup>th</sup> 1780.

SIR,

I arrived here yesterday evening very much indisposed by a severe cold and fever.<sup>2</sup> The two<sup>3</sup> Packets that accompany this I received a day or two before I left Richmond and take this earliest occasion, to transmit them — They contain<sup>4</sup> the Provision Act with a letter from the Governor, pointing out the manner of executing that law. Permit me, Sir, to observe, that upon the quick and successful execution of this measure,<sup>5</sup> the most important consequences to this and the other United States, do eminently depend. The law has been dictated by<sup>6</sup> necessity, but there is much reason to hope that the measures taken by the last session<sup>7</sup> of Assembly, to supply the public treasury in future, will prevent returns of such necessity. If we may be at liberty to reason from causes to effects, it is very fair to conclude that if we join our allies, in making adequate and proper efforts this campaign to defeat the ambitious views of G. B., we shall see her compelled before next summer, to submit to a<sup>8</sup> peace safe and honorable for the United States and their friends.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> A. dr. L. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 345. A text is printed in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, January, 1860, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The two preceding words are written above “caught at Richmond” erased.

<sup>3</sup> Substituted for “inclosed” erased.

<sup>4</sup> Substituted for “cover” erased.

<sup>5</sup> The words “the greatest possible consequences” are here erased.

<sup>6</sup> The words “necessity the present” are here erased.

<sup>7</sup> The three words preceding are substituted for “this” erased.

<sup>8</sup> The word “safe” is here erased.

<sup>9</sup> The words “The avarice and unjust ambition of our enemies is” are here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

efforts of our Enemies, stimulated by the bad principles of revenge, avarice and unjust ambition are such this year,<sup>1</sup> as must inevitably leave them<sup>2</sup> at the end of it in a state of political lifelessness from which it will be extremely difficult to recover—Our great and good Allies wisely discover this, and whilst their powerful efforts<sup>3</sup> give them a decisive superiority at Sea, upon that element where G. B. until now hath triumphed the imperious mistress, They reasonably expect from us such<sup>4</sup> coexertion as our own honor<sup>5</sup> safety, & happiness demand. We know with certainty that his most Christian Majesty<sup>6</sup> hath determined to assist us immediately<sup>7</sup> against our enemies, this campaign with a considerable land and sea force, which calls for direct<sup>8</sup> and large supplies of provisions to feed the armies of co-operation, both in the north and the south. Under [t]hese circumstances, and with these veiw[s], the General Assembly, doubting not the virtue nor the generosity of their Constituents, have fallen upon such means as appeared to them most effectual, for bringing men & provisions into the field with that expedition and certainty which so great a Crisis demands. The care of the Meat house is here the female province, so that much depends on their cheerfulness in part of this necessary business—I am sure that the women of Virginia yield not to any in patriotism and<sup>9</sup> love for

<sup>1</sup> The words “but so very great [?]” are here erased.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “him” erased.

<sup>3</sup> The words “under their decisively see” are here erased.

<sup>4</sup> The word “efforts” is here erased.

<sup>5</sup> The word “honor” is inserted above the line.

<sup>6</sup> The incomplete sentence “intends that a powerful land and sea force shall assist us this summer in driving the British from their possession within the states and render it” is erased.

<sup>7</sup> The word “immediately” is inserted above the line.

<sup>8</sup> Substituted for “immediate.”

<sup>9</sup> An illegible erasure follows this word.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the happiness of their Country, and<sup>1</sup> that whilst the armies of America<sup>2</sup> have received great and generous assistance from the industrious collections and donations of the virtuous women of Pennsylvania, we shall see our Ladies extremely solicitous to<sup>3</sup> furnish all the provisions that they can possibly spare, to relieve the wants of these brave men who[se]<sup>4</sup> lives are daily hazarded for their security.

If to this we add the consideration of those great internal divisions, which threaten even a revolution in G. B: the manly resolution of Ireland to be discharged from B. Tyranny; and the vast national debt, now not less than 200 millions, sterling; a once commercial nation, with her commerce nearly ruined; and under their accumulated pressures, not one Ally; the Powers of Europe veiw[ing] as with one eye, and approving as with one mind, the downfall of a power that has been exercised with insult and oppression to almost every nation upon earth.

If this sentiments can be of any service to you or your colleagues in the execution of this necessary collection,<sup>5</sup> it will make me happy. they are certainly formed upon the best information & closest attentions to things —

I am &c<sup>6</sup>

To COL. CHILTON,  
Commissioner of the Money tax.

<sup>1</sup> The words "it will" are here erased.

<sup>2</sup> The words "that are barely fighting for their security."

<sup>3</sup> The words "relieve the" are here erased.

<sup>4</sup> The words "are bravely fighting" are here erased.

<sup>5</sup> Substituted for "business" erased.

<sup>6</sup> The following note, in Lee's handwriting, evidently refers to prices fixed by the Provision Act mentioned in the letter: Pickled Beef 24/. p<sup>r</sup> lb./, — Salted Pork 30/Bacon 48/ Indian Corn £ 7. p<sup>r</sup> bushel. Wheat £ 20 — Rye 12 — Oats 5 — pease £ 8. Superfine flour £ 60 p<sup>r</sup> hund. w<sup>t</sup> — Co[mmon] d<sup>o</sup> £ 50. Ship Stuff £ 40 p<sup>r</sup> C<sup>t</sup>;



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, July 27<sup>th</sup> 1780

MY DEAR SIR,

I had the honor of writing to you from Richmond some time before I left that place, and hope you have received my letter. Nothing new had occurred when our Assembly adjourned—Cornwallis was still at Camden, busied in collecting provisions—Baron Kalbs force had moved on to Pedee in order to be in a provision country—Besides the 2500 militia that our Assembly had ordered, they have impowered the Governor to call out 20,000 more if necessary, and orders are given to purchase horses to remount Whites & Baylors dragoons to 150 each—A law has passed to get 3000 regulars for the quota deficient of this States Continental troops by indiscriminate draft which is shortly to be executed. We have prospects of getting the necessary provisions by means of a provision bill that passed the last Session for taking the surplusage of each persons meat house after allowing a reasonable supply 'till december next. I hope that the 3000 men to be obtained by our draft law will be ordered South, being persuaded that if general Gates

White biscuit 75 p<sup>r</sup> C<sup>t</sup>, brown do £ 60. W. I. R[um] £ 30 p<sup>r</sup> Gallon, Taffia £ 20, brandy 25 Corn Spirits 15, Alum Salt £ 40 p<sup>r</sup> bushel, French or fine Salt £ 30.

Authorized to take the surplus of Salted Beef—pork—Bacon—And of I. Corn half the surplus, after leaving sufficient for the use of the family, or those in his or her service to the first day of december next. Of Wheat, rye, oats, flour, rum, & other spirits the surplus, leaving as aforesaid to the first day of Sept<sup>r</sup> 1781—Also a sufficient qty of such grain for seed—Not exceeding one half of Biscuit, salt, rum & other spirits for sale—

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 20. Addressed to him as, "Member of Congress /at/ Philadelphia." Endorsed, "rec'd 7<sup>th</sup> August—answd 8<sup>th</sup>."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

be properly supported,<sup>1</sup> he will soon compel the enemy to shelter behind the works of Charles Town, from which refuge the fleet of our Ally may hereafter assist us in driving them. The times are growing big with events, and I shall thank you Sir for a continuance of your former goodness in<sup>2</sup> informing me as these events are brought forth — I was extremely chagrined to learn since my return that you my worthy friend had in this county lodged at an Ordinary — You would have made my family infinitely happy to have entertained you at Chantilly, and I had hoped that you would not have passed this way without giving this family that pleasure. The Ordinaries in general in this country are so vile, that they are in no respect qualified to entertain a gentleman, which is an additional reason for not neglecting your friends as you pass — After the drawing of every class of the continen<sup>1</sup> Lottery heretofore they published a small pamphlet containing a list of the prizes — I suppose they have done the same of the third class lately finished — You will do me a favor Sir by inclosing me p<sup>r</sup> next post one of these little pamphlets with information when the 4<sup>th</sup> class will begin drawing — Be so kind Sir as fill up and forward the inclosed letters for me, as I am uncertain where the Gentlemen may now be — It is probable that D<sup>r</sup> Lee & M<sup>r</sup> Izard have arrived in the French fleet — There ought to be some, if there are not, in & about Congress extremely ashamed to look them [those] injured gentlemen in the face — The family here desire to be respectfully remembered to you, as I do to M<sup>r</sup> Rutledge, M<sup>r</sup> Bee &<sup>c</sup> &<sup>c</sup>

I am my [dear] Sir with the most perfect esteem and regard your obliged friend and obedient<sup>3</sup> servant.

<sup>1</sup> The word “that” is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> This word is writtten over an erased word.

<sup>3</sup> The first two letters of this word are written over other letters.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY JULY 30<sup>th</sup> 1780

MY DEAR FRIEND

In the letter which I expect you will receive with this I had forgotten to mention an affair to you in which your friendship may avail my sons — I expect that they are arrived from France in the fleet now at Rhode Island, and I expect that they will find great difficulty in getting their baggage safely transported from thence to this place — Young and of course too confiding they may leave what is at this time very important, all their baggage with some worthless low Quartermaster by which it may be plundered or lost — Should it come in this line, your interference with some one of the principals in that department may secure the safe conveyance of it to my brother in law D<sup>r</sup> Shippen in fourth street Philadelphia — Or perhaps it might get more quickly and safely to the same place by means of the Ships that will I suppose be frequently coming to the Delaware from R. Island for provisions for the fleet. A line from the Minister would secure that — And indeed it would be in every respect the best way for my Sons to get to Philadelphia — if Sir you should hear of my sons<sup>2</sup> arrival at R. I. will you do me the favor to write to them, or either of them on this subject, and give them your advice and direction — Both them and myself will be highly obliged to you for so doing. A relation of mine, M<sup>r</sup> William Lee, who landed at Boston in the course of last summer, committed his baggage to the Quartermasters department to be brot to Philadelphia, but he has never heard of it

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 21. Addressed to him as, "Member of Congress / at / Philadelphia." Endorsed, "rec'd 7<sup>th</sup> August — — Answ<sup>d</sup> 8<sup>th</sup>."

<sup>2</sup> The two preceding words are substituted for "their" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

since, and he is in much distress for want of his cloaths — it will be a great favor to him if you can assist him to recover his baggage by your application to some of the Generals in that line. You observe I apply to you with that little reserve that a man will always do to a person on whose friendship he relies implicitly. I pray heaven Sir, that the same fortune which has lately been so injurious to you, may shortly make you ample restitution — I should be *confident* of succeeding in my wish if this Diety were not *blind* — As it is I hope there is a *good chance* —

I am, with the sincerest esteem and regard my dear Sir your affectionate and obliged friend.

TO HENRY LAURENS<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR SIR,

CHANTILLY August the 12. 1780

A letter that I received from our friend M<sup>r</sup> Bee a fortnight past was the first notice that I had of the probability of your speedily sailing, and caused me to apprehend that you would have left Philadelphia before my last letter from hence reached you — Your favor of the 1<sup>st</sup> instant sett's that matter right, and from the usual delay in our marine matters, I am induced to think that these my thanks for that favor will yet find you in Philadelphia. When you do go, for public reasons and from private affection, I do most sincerely wish you health, happiness and success — I have no doubt but that I shall hear from you when your leisure permits, and if you will favor me with your address I shall do myself the honor to inform you how we go on — The goodness of providence has caused good to spring from evil, and

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Long Island Historical Society, Laurens Correspondence, No. 22. Addressed to him as, "Member of Congress / at / Philadelphia." Endorsed, "Recd. 16<sup>th</sup> Decem 1782."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

in human affairs I think that good is generally derived from great extremities of ill — Here let us rest our hopes, and I will expect to inform you e'er long that men and things are mended much — in truth I think we do mend in this quarter — It will be with infinite pleasure that I shall inform you of your most substantial property in the south being ravished from the hands of its present rude possessors. I observe with great satisfaction in the Baltimore paper of the 1<sup>st</sup> that Jamaica is certainly attacked with 36 sail of the Line & 26,000 men — Success against that important Isla[n]d will probably bring our enemies to reason, and open their ears to honorable peace. M<sup>r</sup> Lovell has not favored me with a line for many weeks past — I began to fear he had left Congress — but now I shall inclose this to him least you should be gone — I am dear Sir, with the sincerest affection your obliged friend.

No news here. Turn over.

P. S. If the sturdy beggars you speak of insist upon their point, I would not hesitate to send them a dismission and appoint to their places so many Colonels who I doubt not would do to the business full as well.

TO ARTHUR LEE<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY August 31<sup>st</sup> 1780

MY DEAR BROTHER,

After more than four months from its date your letter from Orient, of April the 3<sup>d</sup> reached me at this place. I very much approve the plan you propose to

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 337. Addressed to him "at / Philadelphia, // Care of M<sup>ss</sup> Shippen." A copy of this letter with variations is in the Cabell Transcripts in the Virginia Historical Society.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

pursue on your arrival at Philadelphia — to obtain from the present Congress a full justification of yourself is highly proper, and it is most justly due to you upon the strong principles of your public services, and the injuries you have received from “public acts” which in consideration of the former, ought to have conveyed honor and favor, not co[u]ntenance to the false, wicked, and vile insinuations and arts of your abandoned enemies. When this full and unequivocal justification is obtained, some repose may be necessary, as it is certainly due to your long and active services. But in a cause like ours your patriotism will suggest that ‘whilst any thing remains to do, nothing is done’ — At all events I hope we shall have the happiness of seeing you here when you have done with Congress — But previous to your coming, might it not be well to consider upon, and fix with your friends your future residence at the best for practising the law. This profession you may depend upon it, entered on and practised with reputation, will presently secure to you the influence you deserve, and enable you to command what you please in the state where you live. Philadelphia or Boston seem to me to be the only Theatres for great Actors to play upon. Our most worthy and wise friend Samuel Adams Esq<sup>r</sup> can advise you respecting the latter; and intelligence of the former may be well obtained from Chief Justice M<sup>c</sup>Kean, the Attorney General, M<sup>r</sup> Sergeant and President Read — The first of these gentlemen is your friend, and he is one of those few whom I have known in Congress from its commencement in 1774, and whom I have found uniformly firm, sensible, and attached to the cause of America upon the best principles. I recommend that gentleman to your particular attention. M<sup>r</sup> Sargeant is popular, of republican principles, and very industrious in pursuit of his objects —



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

his information and services may be useful, . . .<sup>1</sup> You know President Reed and his family — he is in general esteem, and from his knowledge of men and things in Pennsylvania, I should suppose he can give you the best advice concerning the practise of law in Philadelphia — Surely where such a flutterer upon the surface as Gouverneur Morris can live at all, that you may greatly profit by the pursuit of law. With respect to the obtaining of your full justification from Congress, altho it is so justly your due, and so necessary to be obtained, yet you know that Men are such things as renders it wise to take measures even for coming at justice — You are too well acquainted with human nature not fully to feel the wisdom of Polonius's advice to his son, "give every man your ear, but few your voice" — I would not seem to know who were my enemies in Congress — but you will know your friends — the latter will have your voice, whilst the former have only your ear. M<sup>r</sup> Samuel Adams may be<sup>2</sup> "grappled to your soul with hooks of steel — his friendship for you, his knowlege of men, and his wise penetration can and will wonderfully assist you with regard to men and measures. Most of the Eastern Delegates were your friends. M<sup>r</sup> Vandyke from Delaware is very sensible, honest, and much your friend. Governor Bee of South Carolina, is a gentleman of worth and sensible of the injustice you have received — But your friend M<sup>r</sup> Izard can inform you exactly concerning the South Carolina gentleman. I must confess that I was surprised, you had so far put your return to America in the power of D<sup>r</sup> Franklin as to commit yourself to the Alliance — the conscious guilt of that old man and the wicked enmity he has practised and encouraged against you, must conspire

<sup>1</sup> A sentence partly in cipher is here omitted.

<sup>2</sup> The words "a proper person" are here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

to make him fear your arrival here, and instigate the fullest exertion of his art and malicious cunning, supported by his present power to procure your detention in Europe. A thousand plausible pretexts would not be wanting to effect that purpose — It will give me infinite pleasure to learn that you are removed from within.] the sphere of that wicked old man's power and influence — and therefore I hope you will give me the earliest notice of your arrival at Philadelphia — If Ludwell is not useful to you there, I think he may benefit himself by repairing to Williamsburg and finishing his law studies under M<sup>r</sup> Wythe, who is now most worthily employed in the character of Law professor at Willi<sup>m</sup> & Mary College — which professorship he discharges the duty of with wonderful ability both as to theory and practise. The sooner therefore that Ludwell gets under his tuition the better! meaning always that he must remain with you so long as he is useful to you. The times are amazingly expensive, more so by far than my means to hold pace with the general extravagance — D<sup>r</sup> Shippen can inform you whether Ludwell cannot conveniently get a passage for himself and baggage down the Delaware by water to Christeen in the passageboat, and so hire a conveyance over from thence to the Head of Elk — From thence he may readily get a passage to Annapolis by the way of Baltimore. At the latter of these places my friend M<sup>r</sup> Purveyance (either of the Brothers) will advise and assist his further progress. Governor Lee of Maryland is his relation, If he passes thro' Annapolis let him wait on the Governor, & Col<sup>o</sup> Lloyd, if in Town. When he is at the head of Elk or Baltimore, if he can get certain intelligence that the Bay is clear of the enemies' privateers, and that our Vessels of war are in the Bay, he may then come by water from those places with his baggage either to Potowmack or Rap-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

pahannock — But on no account let him venture this water passage unless he is informed certainly of both the above circumstances, because the small armed Boats<sup>1</sup> of the enemy are incessantly pushing in and out of the Bay, and they take many of the small vessels going down and use the people ill — this risk must not be encountered by Ludwell — if he comes by land from Philadelphia let him call on my friends Jacob Giles at Susquehanna, M<sup>r</sup> Purveyance at Baltimore — M<sup>r</sup> Diggs or M<sup>r</sup> West near Upper Marlborough, and Squire Lee at Cedar Point.

I am my dear brothers most affectionate faithful friend.

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY Sept<sup>r</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> 1780

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It has given me great pleasure to hear that you are once more returned to Congress. That perseverance which can patiently encounter so many obstacles for the attainment of public good deserves great applause, and must surely in the end be crowned with success. There are two things that in my opinion deserve present and close attention. I mean the confederation, and restoring the credit of our paper money. The powers of Europe (to say nothing of our own quarrels) ambitious, avaritious, and unprincipled as they are, may be induced to consider us as easy & therefore fair prey, so long as we continue in the discordant, jarring and unorganized state in which we now are. The confederation alone can give us system, strength, and respectful consideration —

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “Vessels” erased.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

This necessary coalition has been hitherto ostensibly prevented by the claim of Virginia to all the western lands within her charter on this side the Mississippi. The present time appears to me to be a favorable crisis for Congress to open a treaty with Virginia upon this subject. I hope that a cession of the fine country northwest of Ohio may be obtained from this State on the following easy conditions. That the ceded lands be sold fairly, and the purchase money bona fide applied to the extinguishing the Continental debt—that not fewer than two or three States be there established—And that Virginia be reimbursed the expence she has actually incurred in wresting that country from the British possession by her arms alone. These appear to me very equitable conditions, and as far as I can discover the sentiments of the most wise and virtuous men amongst us, I am inclined to think that if Congress makes these propositions to our ensuing Assembly, the consent of that body may be obtained to them. If therefore you and your friends approve the plan, no time should be lost in having it settled in Congress. When this is agreed to, Maryland can have no just objection to signing the Confederation—Should she refuse after this, I really think that it behooves the other states to take care of themselves by confederating without that refractory sister. My reason for pressing the proposition during the next session of our Assembly arises from my apprehension that some able friends to the scheme will retire from the Assembly at the end of this year, which may render its success doubtful hereafter. Our Assembly meets the 2<sup>d</sup> of next month, and will probably not rise before the end of November.

To restore the credit of our currency is indeed of great and necessary consideration—So far as I am able to judge, the plan of Congress recommended the 18<sup>th</sup>



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of March for that purpose, is as good a one as our actual circumstances admit of—but unfortunately the whole race of Tories, Speculators, and those who mean to defraud creditors are combined against it—You may have heard with what difficulty an acquiescence was obtained in this and some other States—Our act adopts the plan when “a Majority of the United States of America (except Georgia & S. Carolina) have actually or *conditionally* approved of and acceded to the said resolutions of Congress” &c. If therefore it is deemed of consequence that this State should effectually adopt the plan, I must entreat you Sir to procure me authentic documents against the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, if it can be done so soon, or as soon thereafter as possible, what the States north of Maryland have certainly done in this business. I have a letter from one American gentleman to another in France, dated Nov<sup>r</sup> 26<sup>th</sup>, wherein is the following passage “D<sup>r</sup> Franklin, Chaumont, & D<sup>r</sup> Bancroft, have held a Court of enquiry on Capt. Landais, & the report of this *respectable* board, it is said, is to be laid before Congress. The Owner of a french privateer (Chaumont) sits in judgement upon the Captain of an American ship of War for disobeying the orders of the Captain of that privateer; nothing can be more consistent with the dignity of a sovereign state, or tend more to promote our Marine and render it respectable.”

How long my dear friend must the dignity, honor, and interest of these United States be sacrificed to the bad passions of that old man under the idea of his being a philosopher? That philosophy which does not rectify the heart is not the kind of wisdom which it befits republicanism to cherish and to confide in. If this man must be retained in the public service with all his imperfections on his head, let him be sent to some Court, *causa honoris*, where he can do neither good



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

nor harm — the Emperors for instance, or her of all the Russias — But to let him remain, immersed in indolence & inattention (to say no worse) with such prime Ministers as Chaumont, Bancroft, Petrie &c &c about him at the very centre of most active and interesting politics, is really a burlesque upon all policy, & may finally produce most fatal mischief to our cause. I fear that you are not now in the Marine Committee, and my friend General Whipple is away, so that this dishonorable and degrading manner of treating our Navy Captains, by submitting them to the command of privateers, will probably be not only overlooked, but applauded. Col<sup>o</sup> Geo. Mason who is as wise and worthy a man as any we have requests me to recommend M<sup>r</sup> Richard Harrison a native of Maryland, now a Merchant in Cadiz, to the office of Consul for Spain — Col<sup>o</sup> Mason knows M<sup>r</sup> Harrison to be a Man of integrity, and Commercial ability, and he esteems him a very fit person to discharge the duty of Consul for America in that Kingdom — I beg leave Sir to recommend M<sup>r</sup> Harrison to your friendship and the patronage of your friends in Congress. Give me leave now to return you my thanks for your civilities to my cousin and ward M<sup>r</sup> William Lee — the young gentleman is very grateful for your kindness which rescued him from much distress.

I hope you left M<sup>rs</sup> Adams and your family well — How does Gen. Warren and did he receive D<sup>r</sup> Lees pamphlet that I sent him on Deanes libel? Be so kind as deliver the inclosed, and present my thanks to M<sup>r</sup> Lovell for his favor, laconic as it was, by the last post — I shall return him my thanks under my own hand next post — With the warmest sentiments of friendship and the truest esteem I am my dear Sir your very affectionate.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO DR. NATHANIEL PEABODY<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA

September 24 1780

SIR,

I do not think myself the less obliged to you for having not sooner answered your kind favor of Nov. the 22<sup>d</sup>—It was rather improper to interrupt your attentions at Camp with reading my much less important letters. I have lately heard that you were returned to Philadelphia. I fear the season is much too far advanced for any decisive operations to be attempted against N. York this campaign, but if the second division of our Allies fleet should arrive & give a superiority at Sea in this quarter, may not the winter be most profitably employed in retaking Charles Town & recovering the two Southern states from our enemies? With a superiority at Sea the attempt may not only be made, but I think we shall have the fairest prospect of success—After which, a return to N. York in the spring may present an opportunity of doing something there.

I wish to see the heavy ships of our Allies removed from the boisterous latitudes to these southern ones, before that season of the year arrives which may expose them to a disaster like to that which Clinton met with last winter in his passage from North to South. This State will presently send forward to the Southern Army a reenforcement of 4000 men, that is 3000 recruits for the Continental army & 1000 good western militia, but we must be supplied with arms by Congress, the late disaster in S. Carolina having prevented us from arming these men. And if it were possible to furnish

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Virginia Historical Society, Leffingwell Collection. Addressed to him as "Member of Congress / at / Morristown."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Tents likewise it will be highly proper, as we are destitute of that article also. In short we must recover Charles Town and the Southern States this ensuing winter whilst our Allies are here—This recovery can only be obtained by victory, and let us say with Philip the father of Alexander the great “Victory is to be purchased by *money*, and that money must not be spared at the expense of *victory*”. I have the pleasure Sir to be most perfectly agreed with you in opinion concerning the “Jesuitical partisan” you mention—

I think you may depend upon it that nothing good for America will come from that quarter—If I mistake not you begin to discover this in the plausible difficulties that oppose the views of America, & the affected desire to remove them, all which will probably end in the sacrifice of the interest of these States to others—You are certainly right Sir, that a proper “Satellite” is indispensable—Why then is not such an one appointed without delay?—The interest of our country is paramount to all other sublunary considerations—Will not the enlightened Court of our Ally plainly see how miserably we are represented & will not men argue from thence to the want of some great essentials in the people who suffer such representation?—

I fear the consequences & wish the causes removed. Great Britain will probably persist in her obstinacy whilst she sees us conduct our affairs without wisdom & reposing confidence very improperly.

Where is my much esteemed friend Gen. Whipple, & is he in good health—pray remember me to him with great affection.

I was in hope that Dr. Lee might have had time to have visited his worthy friends in New Hampshire—My respects, if you please to my friends in Congress, particularly Mr. Adams, Mr Lovell & Mr Sherman,

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Mr M<sup>c</sup> Kean & Mr Vandike—I have the honor to be Sir

Sincerely your friend,

TO ARTHUR LEE<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND 29<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 80.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I am happy to hear of your safe arrival in Philadelphia, & I hope to be made more happy by seeing you at Chantilly as soon as you have finished at Congress—As I suppose my sons are on their way home I shall say nothing of them. It is to be hoped that you will find in Congress now more justice, impartiality and patriotism than I left it possessed of—If you meet with sensible, patriotic, & candid minds in Congress, I have no doubt but that our affairs in Europe will be put into abler & more honest hands than some of them are at present.

My fears are great indeed, least the sagacity of European observation should see, or think they see too much depravity and weakness in America, arguing from the manner in which our affairs beyond the water have been conducted, to merit an honorable connection with them—

The last Assembly directed that our Delegates in Congress should send here an exact account of all the monies heretofore received by any Delegates from this State to Congress jointly or severally from the Treasury of the United States vouched by sd. Treasurer, and also an account of the expenditure of all pub. money entrusted to the Delegation &c &c—These accounts have not been sent. Enquire of Colo. Bland

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Virginia Historical Society, Leffingwell Collection. Addressed to him “in Philadelphia.”

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

if he has seen this Resolve of the Assembly & perhaps he may be able to give a reason why this has not been complied with.

It will be usefull to the public that these accounts be forwarded without delay, in the manner desired by the Assembly, . . .<sup>1</sup>

Our state is at present invaded and some accounts say powerfully, but we have nothing authentic yet concerning the force or the designs of the enemy—I think that the best put together place their number about 3000 land Troops, besides the Marine force—the whole would be a tolerable good hall if a french fleet was to enter our Bay—Ten thousand Militia are ordered out, & the general alacrity with which all Classes turn out seems to denote that the enemy will not long remain here—We want arms and Tents. The Militia appear determined to heal their wounded—The defeat of Majr. Ferguson with 1000 & more men who are all killed wounded & prisoners, was effected under the conduct of a Virginia Militia Colonel with a mixture of North Carolina & Virginia Militia—This was really a well fought battle—the Militia were fewer in number than the enemy, and the latter strongly posted upon the top of King's Mountain—The Assailants were divers times repulsed, but a brave perseverance at length gained them a complete victory.

This and some other successes in the South have compelled Lord Cornwallis to depart with great precipitation for Charles Town—

He is hotly pursued, but it is feared he will escape as he was within 80 miles of Charles Town when we last heard of him—With the aid of a fleet, it will be no very difficult matter to rescue Charles Town from its present possessors before next spring—We are

<sup>1</sup> Two sentences partly in cipher are here omitted.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

very apprehensive that our brother William & his family will be much distressed for want of remittances from his estate here but how to make such in the present state of things we do not know. I have Loan Office certificates of his for between 20 & 30 thousand pounds, which I am told will sell well in Philadelphia for bills of exchange—Some of these certificates draw sterling interest and most of them are of old dates—Enquire if you please whether bills that are good can be so purchased & if you think it proper the certificates shall be sent to you for the purpose of remittance—

What were our brother Williams views when you left France? My compliments to Mr. Lovell & tell him that I shall thank him for the last published Vol. of the Journals of Congress if any has been published since the last that I have which ends with the year 1777—

I have not heard either from Mr. S. Adams or Mr. Lovell for some time, altho I have often written to them both—perhaps my letters have miscarried—Ask them if you please—

My friend M<sup>r</sup>. Adams seems to have forgot me quite. Love to my sister & the family—Farewell—

### TO THE[ODORIC] BLAND<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND October 31<sup>st</sup> 1780

DEAR SIR,

When I propose to you a correspondence between us, I do not mean to interrupt your attention to more

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Maine Historical Society, Fogg Collection. Addressed, "Honorable The. Bland esquire / Member of Congress / at / Philadelphia." Endorsed, "R<sup>d</sup> Hy Lee's / Letter / Answered." Bland was a member of Congress from Virginia from 1780 to 1783.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

weighty matters — but it seems to me Sir that such a correspondence may eventually produce good to our common country. It is now sixteen days since our Assembly ought to have met, and yet to this day we have not members enough to make a house, altho the invasion of our country calls loudly for legislative aid. The enemy have been plundering in the neighborhood of Hampton and in Princess Anne & Norfolk counties, they are at present as high as within 8 miles of Smithfield — A great spirit appears among the people of all ranks and much zeal to engage the enemy, but the extensiveness of the country and dispersion of the people occasions delay — I am sorry to say that neither the Artillery or small arms are in proper order, and will be the source of much hinderance. Gen Muhlenberg with 1000 men is about 20 miles from the enemy — his party is constantly increasing, so that a battle or a retreat must quickly take place — We have an intercepted letter from Cornwallis to Clinton requesting that he would cause a post to be taken at Portsmouth with 2500 men to favor, as the former says “his favorite project” — Whatever may have been this “project” Col<sup>o</sup> Campbell with a few brave militia of N. Carolina & this State seems to have effectually defeated it by the destruction of Maj<sup>r</sup> Ferguson & his party of about 1100 men — It appears that since the defeat of Ferguson Tarleton came with his Corps upon Campbell in order to release the prisoners he had made, but the former got drubbed and lost 70 of his men upon the spot — Col<sup>o</sup> Campbell is a member of our house, and is, I believe, now in pursuit of Cornwallis who is, with great precipitation urging his way to Charles Town — an officer of our Militia who was wounded in the battle of Gen Gates is just come here from Camden from him we learn that Cornwallis was marching down on this side the Wateree with Gen. Sumner attending him on the other

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

side, and Gen. Davison & Col<sup>o</sup> Davie with the horse pushing & greatly distressing his rear — Col<sup>o</sup> Marianne with the force that took George Town in his front — Thus stands our intelligence from the South and from the enemy in this State — perhaps before the post goes out we may get further news, and if we do you shall have it. I shall thank you Sir for inclosing in that journal which contains the proceedings respecting Dr. Lee since his arrival at Philadelphia, and also the Table of depreciation published by Congress

Nov<sup>r</sup> 3. I have given you the accounts which have been brought here under the first date of this letter, but a gentleman who arrived here yesterday from N. Carolina makes it doubtful whether Cornwallis is not yet in the neighborhood of Cambden, so that we remain in suspense until authentic information shall set us right. Our invading enemy has certainly retreated from Suffolk upon the approach of Gen. Muhlenberg and have retired to the fastnesses about Portsmouth after plundering the country indiscriminately — Be so kind as deliver the inclosed to D<sup>r</sup> Lee — I am dear Sir your most affectionate and obedient.

No House yet, be [but] we expect one on Monday next.

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND November 10. 1780

MY DEAR SIR,

I was yesterday made happy by your favor of the 30<sup>th</sup> current — I say made happy because every recognition of our friendship is extremely agreeable to me. I always imputed your silence to causes very different from an abatement of esteem, because I

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

believe that friendship founded on virtue is not easily changed by time or place — I wish not to form many new connections with members of Congress, because I know few of them well enough to induce me to it. People who view us at a distance may suppose from mistakes and mis[s]tated causes that this State has much fallen from its original attachment to the American system, but, if you will except the general injury done to morality by the superabundance of money, I think there is no great cause for censure. The war being distant & money plenty had produced a vicious kind of apathy which the enemies invasion seems to have roused us from, as the spirit of resistance is very active — The militia collect in numbers, and with great alacrity — The men are good and in high spirits — but alas we want a sufficiency of Arms, of ammunition, tents blankets & other covering for a winters Campaign — The enemy have however retired from our advancing troops, and covered themselves with the most intricate defiles about Portsmouth, where water and morasses render a few secure against numbers unaided by *marine force*. The enemies water strength is one 44 a frigate & a Sloop of war — Our present land force aided by one ship of the line with our Continental frigates in the Delaware could easily secure the enemies whole powers here — What pity is it that this stroke cannot be silently and rapidly struck! Can it not be — Cannot our Ally furnish the Line of battle ship & we, (the Congress meaning) the frigates. Cannot this be done by silent & judicious concert? It deserves much consideration, because it is I think practicable, and because it would very assuredly ruin the enemies views upon the Southern States — We have intercepted letters from Leslie to Cornwallis which inform us that the former was taking post at Portsmouth where he waited for orders from the latter —



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Since Col<sup>o</sup> Campbells defeat of Ferguson upon Kings mountain, we have reason to think that Cornwallis finds his affairs in a very embarrassed situation, which would be rendered much worse than that if what I have already suggested could take place — We have this day resolved to raise our quota of Continental troops for the war, and I assure you the difficulty of accomplishing it will be great, but the determination is to overcome every difficulty<sup>1</sup> — To this end a further emission of money is indispensable, but it will I trust be as guarded as possible — I am happy that D<sup>r</sup> Lee continues to meet your esteem, and I wish for the honor of Congress and the encouragement of virtue that he had not been treated as he has — I pray you Sir to remember me affectionately to M<sup>rs</sup> Adams and if you correspond with Gen Whipple tell him that I hope to continue among the number of his friends — I am under many obligations to M<sup>r</sup> Lovell, and wish to be remembered to him — Farewell my dear friend.

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON?]<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY Jan. 7. 1781

\* \* \* I left Richmond on the 3<sup>d</sup> Inst. in the Afternoon & in the Evening I received a Letter from the Governour informing me, that Arnold with Six Ships, 7 or 8 Brigs & 10 other Vessels, with from 1500 to 2000 Men on Board was as high as Jamestown, & making Sail up James River. The Design of this Party is certainly to plunder & interrupt our Attention to the Southern War. Their Ships present them a sure Asy-

<sup>1</sup> The two preceding words are substituted for illegible words erased.

<sup>2</sup> Copy of an extract. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, XLV. 40.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

lum whenever we come upon them with a superior Force which in our dispersed Manner, is some Time collecting; & then they sail to another River & so on keeping us in continual hot Water. Altho this pitiful Way of warring puts them not a Jot nearer to their Point of Conquest, yet it may interrupt, & thereby prevent their Ruin, in another Quarter. In their present State one Ship of the Line with a Frigate or two, coming into our Bay would be a Means of speedily & easily apprehending the whole Band of Plunderers, remove our Embarrassments & give free Course to our Southern Operations. The Ships that effected this Service might be gone away before the Enemy could get Notice & come with a superior Force by Sea. Besides I do not think they would venture much to relieve the Collection now here. The Success of such a Plan would depend much on its Secrecy & Quickness. Cannot the Minister [?] be consulted [?] on this Point; & the French General & Admiral at Rhode Island thro<sup>1</sup> Gen. Washington. I am satisfied that the Sea Force mentioned already would do the Business & go away before the Enemy could know that it was in Agitation. If you should think with me on this Subject I make no Doubt but that you will take instant Measures to enforce its Adoption with the Zeal that is necessary. \* \* \*

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY february 5th 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND

Your favor of the 15th post, was duly delivered to me, by my brother, who with my eldest son arrived safely

<sup>1</sup> The word looks something like "this."

<sup>2</sup> From the text printed in *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Second Series, I. 186.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

here a few days ago. The many just and excellent observations, with which your letter abounds, I shall reply to hereafter ; at present, my design is to be confined, chiefly, to the consideration of the cession, made to the United States, by this Commonwealth, at our last session of assembly, of all the country North-West of the river Ohio, which is contained within the charter limits of this country. The country thus yielded, is greater in extent, than that which remains to us, between the Ocean, and the Ohio, and in point of climate and soil, it is far preferable — the terms of cession, so far as I can judge are perfectly reasonable. Notwithstanding this, there are powerful reasons, which I clearly see, will obstruct, if not defeat the acceptation of this cession by Congress. It will be a means of perfecting our Union, by closing the Confederation — and thus our Independency will be secured in a great measure. It will bar the hopes, of some powerful confederated Land jobbers, who have long had in contemplation immense possessions in this ceded country, under pretence of Indian purchases, and other plausible, but not solid titles. It is plain therefore, that personal interest, and political views — Toryism, British interest, and Land-jobbing views, combine members without and within doors, to reject this proffered cession. — The modes and methods, which these artists pursue, are well understood, by the judicious, attentive friends to the Independence of these States — They pretend great friendship and concern for the Independ[en]cy, the Union, and Confederation of America, but by circuitous means, attack and destroy those things, that are indispensable to those ends. Hitherto the avarice and ambition of Virginia, has prevented Confederation — Now when Virginia, has yielded half, and more than half her Charter Claim, the argument will be applied to the terms as improper, and for certain

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

purposes perhaps it may be said, that the quantity ceded is not enough—in short anything that can operate the delay and defeat of a measure, calculated to sever us completely from Great Britain, and to preclude the avaritious views of certain Land mongers, will be industriously pressed. But my dear friend, cannot *virtue* for once, be as *active* as *vice*—Can we not by effectual industry, contrive, to have a plan adopted, by which our great bond of Union may be secured—Let me observe here, that our assembly is luckily called again to meet, before our annual dissolution, and if this great business can be considered and determined on by Congress, in season for us, so that we may know the result before the next meeting of assembly passes away, I think that it will greatly conduce to the general good and happiness of the United States—after that, which the uniform friends of America have already done, if they can be happy enough to complete this great bond of union, strength, confidence, and credit, the Confederation, they may reasonably be contented, with the fair prospect, that will then open upon them for future happiness and security. Our assembly is called by the Governor, to meet on the first of next month, and the Session will not be long. Mr. — who drew the bill you mention is at present on a journey up the country, but you may be assured, that my exertions will be applied to get the bill immediately and honorably discharged.

I am dear Sir most sincerely  
and affectionately yours,

HONORABLE SAMUEL ADAMS, Esq.  
Member of Congress at Philadelphia.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GENERAL DANIEL MORGAN]<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND March the 21. 1781

SIR,

It is with peculiar pleasure that I execute the order of the House of Delegates in transmitting to you their sense, and thro them, the sense that your country entertains of the many signal services performed by you in the various victories that you have obtained over the enemies of the United States, and more especially in the late well timed total defeat given to the British troops in South Carolina. I am directed to request of you Sir that you will convey to the brave Officers and Troops under your command in the action of the 17<sup>th</sup> of January,<sup>2</sup> the sense entertained by the House of Delegates of their valor and great services upon that memorable occasion.

Having thus discharged my duty to the House of Delegates, permit me to lament that the unfortunate state of your health should deprive the public of those eminent services in the field which you are so capable of performing, and let me hope that it will not be long before a return of health will restore you to the army and to your country.

I have the honor to be with very great respect and esteem, Sir your most obedient and very humble servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Lenox Library, Myers Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Battle of the Cowpens.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA<sup>1</sup>

[THOMAS JEFFERSON]

WILLIAMSBURG March 27, 1781.

MY DEAR SIR

I have had an opportunity of conversing with the worthy Baron at this place, and he communicates to me a plan of joining his force with Gen. Greene, or so to cooperate with him as to render a junction of the British force with Cornwallis difficult if not impossible—The Barons plan appears to me to be one of those Master strokes which are productive of great effects, but which if neglected lay the train for<sup>2</sup> much future evil—When the Carthagenian General was all powerful before Rome the genius of Scipio caried him to Carthage—Comparing small things with great, this plan may save Virginia, by a previous defeat, of Cornwallis—Besides, the Pennsylv<sup>a</sup> Line is coming on—the troops of the Marquis may also be so, and with these no great mischief can happen here whilst a great stroke may be stri[c]ken against the capital foe and the planner of all the southern evils which now distress us. I sincerely wish that the Barons plan may be approved—I wish you happy and I am most sincerely yours.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Pennsylvania Historical Society, Dreer Collection, II. 66. This letter was sent to Jefferson by the hand of Baron Steuben.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “of” erased.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

[*Circ.* April 1 ? 1781.]

MY DEAR AND MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND

A great variety of engagements have prevented me from writing to you lately, and I presume that the same cause has deprived me of the pleasure of hearing from you.

We neither of us mean to distress the other, or to interrupt attention to the public business. From the latter I have claimed some respite by withdrawing, for the present, from our Assembly — but I assure you that our hands are full upon this river with the frequent calls made upon our shores by the piratical vessels of the enemy. I am at present lamed by my horse falling with me in a late engagement we had with the enemy who landed under cover of a heavy cannonade from three vessels of war upon a small body of our militia well posted — After a small engagement we had the pleasure to see the enemy, tho superior in number, run to their boats and precipitately reembark having sustained a small loss of killed and wounded. It seems that Lord Cornwallis has finally reached Wilmington, after having smarted severely for his rash attempt — G. Greene says, “if the Militia of N. Carolina had done *half* their duty the victory would have been complete” meaning the termination of the battle of Guilford — Gen. Greene, like Scipio, has left Cornwallis in N. Carolina and pushed into S. Carolina — intending no doubt to compel the British general to relinquish his prospects this way, or find his southern conquests wrested from him, if he does not return, to defend

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Correspondence, 1780–1782. Addressed to him as “Member of Congress/at/Philadelphia,” and sent by Arthur Lee.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

them. It will be a misfortune if this worthy General is not well supported in his measures which are really wise. He is certainly a Man of Talents. Hitherto the weight of the Southern war has fallen almost entirely upon Virginia — At present, with an Army of the enemy under Philips & Arnold pushing into our Country, and the hostile Vessels plundering along our extensive shores, being pierced by deep rivers in every part, we can execute but partially any law for recruiting the Army, and our Militia is constantly on foot, so that I fear the consequences resulting from neglected Agriculture. And to add to our misfortunes, we want arms, & ammunition. In this real state of things, an effectual marine aid from our Ally is indispensable, and much more assistance from the United States than has yet, so far as I know, been contemplated for the South — In perfect ease, the Northern States may have furnished their quotas of Troops to the Army, in which case I judge the number produced north of Pennsylvania will be near 16000 men exclusive of 5000 french Troops — Is it possible Sir that all these can be necessary in the North, when the enemy are making their last vigorous push in the South? It should be considered that Georgia & S. Carolina are not a help but an expence to us now, & that N. Carolina is rather an instrument in the hands of our enemies than of much utility to us. If I am not mistaken much in this way of reasoning, we should expect not only a marine aid from our Ally, but more assistance from Congress. If the enemy are baffled in their Southern prospects we may expect an honorable peace quickly after, for most assuredly this is the last hope of our wicked enemies.

My brother D<sup>r</sup> Lee will pay the money that you kindly procured for M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee — it has been paid by M<sup>r</sup> Lees friend here in a manner that I hope will be satisfactory. I shall be ever happy to hear from

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

you, because I shall not whilst I continue to be, be other than my dear Sir your faithful friend and affectionate hble serv<sup>t</sup>:

TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA?]<sup>1</sup>

[THOMAS JEFFERSON]

CHANTILLY April 13<sup>th</sup> 1781

DEAR SIR,

Since I had the honor of writing to you by the Express that brot the acts of assembly, one ship and a brig additional to the enemies force on the day of our rencontre with them, have joined and all proceeded together up to Alexandria — we have heard of their passing by the mouth of Occaquon — Being thus reenforced, it is not improbable, that in resentment for what happened here on the 9<sup>th</sup> instant they will attempt to do us injury as they return down the river — Upon this idea, the Officers opinions concurring with my own, I have sent this Express to solicit ammunition and flints, that we may not be found incapable of making defence. The powder and lead that you were pleased to give me an order for in January last, being so far exhausted, that we have not two cartridges a man left, and no flints that are good for any thing. I am informed that there are two or three barrels of powder for sale in this neighborhood which have lately arrived, if your Excellency will authorize me to purchase and draw upon government for what shall be necessary, you may be assured that the trust shall be executed with discretion. And after this, we shall want lead and Cartridge paper, with which, some of our soldiers can form the cartridges.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, III. No. 57.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I expect that the Bearer will be provided with the means of bringing some flints and cartridge paper from Richmond, or flints with ready made cartridges, which latter will suit us well if the attack should come quickly upon us. By the number of Vessels that are now here, and by the concurring accounts of deserters and of our own people who have come from the enemy, it appears that Potomac river will be much the scene of their predatory war this summer. Rob<sup>t</sup> Carter esq<sup>r</sup> late of the council has had 25 negroes taken off a few nights ago from a quarter close by the river side, and from Ceder point Warehouse in Maryland they have lately taken a considerable quantity of Tobacco in open day, besides burning a house or two, and plundering largely. If you have any late news from the south I shall be very thankful for it, as well as for your ordering this Express to be paid what is usual — the distance 74 miles, and two ferries, himself & his horse — the same returning. In our late brush with the enemy we saw opportunities of doing excellent service with a light piece of cannon or two — even a swivel might have conveyed much injury to the enemy — We have a swivel, but we want ball, grape shot, & powder — An order for some of these on Fredericksburg will avail us much. I find that M<sup>r</sup> Parker has transmitted to M<sup>r</sup> Webb an accepted order on Congress to be applied in purchasing some Tob<sup>o</sup> for the relief of his captive Sons in Charles Town — they are very worthy Officers, and government will of course benefit valuable citizens if this order can be so used as to execute the fathers intentions. The inclosed advertisem<sup>t</sup> seems to be of a public nature — if your Excellency should be of that opinion you will order the printer to publish it in the Virginia Gazette —

I have the honor to be Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA <sup>1</sup>

[THOMAS JEFFERSON]

SIR,

[May 10, 1781.]

A letter from Gen. Weedon of the 10<sup>th</sup> instant giving us reason to expect the enemies army presently in this quarter, has been the subject of consideration in a council of our Militia Officers, and it has called our attention closely to the singularity of our situation, which exposes us an easy prey to such a force as lately visited James river.—This has produced the inclosed determination, which I have now the honor to inclose your Excellency by order of the Council. We pray your attention to it, as thereby a tract of country an hundred miles in length and abounding with Slaves, Stocks, and much Tob<sup>o</sup> both public & private may be saved from the hand of ravage and destruction. I[f] you will please to cast your eye upon the Map you will see how easy a matter it is for those who command the Water, with 2000 Men to sweep expeditiously from Fredericksburg to Fleets Bay, whilst the people inclosed on this ground are in a manner cut off from the assistance of their friends and not even possessing the means of escaping from a superior Enemy.—The Militia appear willing to defend themselves, but the means are wanting, as is truly stated in the inclosed paper. So long only as there is just cause to apprehend the hostile visit do we wish for the residence of a Gen<sup>l</sup> Offi<sup>r</sup> and a few regular Troops as a body to Countenance and for the Militia to resort to.—By the advice of Gen<sup>l</sup> Weedon we are forming a Body of

<sup>1</sup> L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, II. 67. The signature, place and date, postscript and signature, and superscription are in Lee's autograph. Addressed to him "at/Richmond." Endorsed, "May 10, 81/From R. H. Lee Esquire respec/ting the enemy's/visiting us according/to Gen<sup>l</sup> Weedons Letter."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Horse, & expect to collect about 50 in this Country — We wish to know if they may expect to be found forage by the public for their horses in case of actual service, and whether the specific provision may not be used by the Militia — when in such service — I lately wrote to your Excellency informing you that I had purchased some powder for the use of the Militia of this county agreeable to your desire — it is by no means a sufficient quantity, and as yet I have been able to get but little Lead — Soon I hope to purchase some more of this latter Article — I requested that you would be pleased to send me some blank Militia Commissions for Officers of different ranks, I have again to repeat that request. — In the Year 1775 I was appointed Lieutenant of this County being the oldest Colonel after the death of my late Brother Col<sup>l</sup> Phil. Lud. Lee. By the frequent moving of my Papers to get out of the way of the Enemy whilst I was at Congress my commission has been mislaid, and as occasion for taking the field seems to be approaching, when a Commission may be necessary in case of falling into the enemies hands, I beg the favor of you to send me one — There may possibly be some difficulty about the date, which being of the present time might expose me to be commanded by some very weak brother of late creation — What can with propriety be done on this occasion I am sure you will do — I should suppose that there would be no incongruity in this case, if it bore date from the first of your administration which will be long after I was actually in the Office — This I leave to you with pleasure, the principal consideration being a Commission in case of coming under the power of the Enemy.

I am with great respect and esteem, Sir, Your Excellency's most Obedient Servant.

CHANTILLY May 10, 1781

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

P.S. May not Gen. Spotswood be sent to these lower parts of the Northern Neck so long as there is cause to apprehend the enemies army coming to Potomac?

TO ARTHUR LEE <sup>1</sup>

EPPING FORREST May 13. 1781

MY DEAR BROTHER,

You may observe by the place from whence I write that Chantilly is no longer our place of residence. Since you left us we have been taught to expect, and we have been vigorously preparing to receive properly on Potomac the hostile visit that has lately done so much damage upon James river. It seems more than probable that the enemy intended here after they had burnt most of the great Warehouses on James river, because they had descended as low as James Town, where meeting with despatch vessels from below they returned with great quickness up to Hoods, landed, and proceeded Southward — the Marquis crossed James river and pursuing them, they have turned about and have again approached James river, that of Appomatox being between them & the Marquis who cannot cross the latter river without putting it in the power of the enemy to push up James river & destroy Richmond before he could recross Appomatox and arrive to prevent them — this is the cruel mischief that attends our want of marine force — with a tenth of our land power they can baffle and injure us most essentially having the command of the water — At this moment, if their water force in James river was put into our hands, their Army would be so likewise in

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Boston Public Library, Chamberlain Collection, E 9. 16. Addressed to him at Philadelphia.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

a few days — We understand that Cornwallis is at Hallifax in N. Carolina looking this way — that Gen. Green has given a capital defeat to Lord Rodden near Cambden, and that our affairs in the South wear a good aspect — Can we not get a fleet to come here, it will produce most salutary consequences. —

Have Congress seen the very artful and dangerous proclamation lately published by Arbuthnot & Clinton. It is published at N. York the 27<sup>th</sup> of december and is now most diligently circulating in the Southern States, whilst we have no Press & no means of counteracting its malignity — Surely Congress will publish such an answer as it easily admits of and cause a sufficiency of Hand bills to be printed for dispersion, especially in these southern parts where a want of Presses renders us in a great measure a prey to such artifices as this proclamation — I think that no time is to be lost in doing this — I enclose you now an accurate list of my Tickets in the 4<sup>th</sup> class of the Cont<sup>l</sup> Lottery — I find that there is one Ticket more than I had in the third Class and of a number different from any that I had in that Class. It was among the number of those Tickets that my most worthy friend D<sup>r</sup> Shippen the elder sent me when you came to Virginia — the number is 13,687 and it may be one of his own Tickets sent me by mistake — Speak to him on the subject & let him know that the Ticket is here with me. — Be so kind as inform me of the fate of my Tickets, and get for me the pamphlet commonly published by the Managers after every Lottery shewing the fate of all Tickets — Pray bestir yourself, get us a french fleet here, and a good answer to this insidious proclamation —

God bless you and make you as happy as I wish you to be — Our love to fourth Street & my respects to my old Whig friends in Congress.

Unalterably yours.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I hope M<sup>r</sup> Izard is well recovered from his illness — it will make me happy to know it<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following is appended to the Ms. as a sort of postscript :  
 “ List of the French fleet / at Martinique the 1<sup>st</sup> May / 1781. /  
 Citoyen 74 De Thy / Glorieux 74 Des Cars / Languedoc 80 Baron  
 D’Aros / Souverain 74 De Glandevez / Diademe 74 De Montecler /  
 Auguste 80 De Bougainville.

### Blue

“ Marseilles 74 De Castellane / Vaillant 64 De Marigny / Bourgogne  
 74 De Charitte / Cesar 74 D Espinouse / Hercule 74 De Turpin /  
 Pluton 80 D’Albert / St. Esprit 80 De Chabert / Victoire 74 St.  
 Hippolite / Solitaire 64 De Cicé Champion / Reflechi 64 De Bodes /  
 Caton 64 De Frammond.

### Frigates

“ Medée 36 de Bouquet / Diligent 32 de Mortimert / Aigrette 32  
 de Traversé.

### Cutters

“ L’Alerte Chabonne / Pandour De Grasse.

### Flutes

17

“ Minotaur 74 / Union 64 / Fier 64 / L’Indien 64 each.

“ Experiment 50 Martilli.

### Frigates

“ Indiscrete / Sensible / Dedaigneuse / Eagle 18 Sloop of War

### May 1

“ At Fort Royal / Le Zélé 74 Preville / Le Scipion 74 Claveille /  
 Northumb<sup>d</sup> 74 Brigueville / Ville de Paris 100 St. Cesaire, de Gras /  
 Sceptre 74 Vaudreuil / L’Hector 74 D’Alains / Magnan<sup>me</sup> 74 Le  
 Begue.

“ Mem<sup>dm</sup> Gen. Knox told / me that on trying the / Gun Barrels sent  
 from / France for the public, / 90 in an 100 burst. / These were the  
 Maga / Zine for w<sup>ch</sup> M<sup>r</sup> / Deane paid 200,000 / livres & were sent /  
 over by M<sup>r</sup> Williams / after a great expense / in fitting them up. /”

On the reverse of the Ms. are the following notes : “ A Hint to  
 those intrusted with Supreme Power.

“ Julius Caesar being desirous of engaging the chief Cities of Gaul in  
 alliance with the roman People, to assist him in his enterprise upon  
 Britain & for that purpose a Convention being to be held, he sent Cotta  
 to the Supreme Council of the principal Nation to propose to them that  
 Certain Persons whom he named & who he knew would be directed by

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO GENERAL [GEORGE WEEDON]<sup>1</sup>

June<sup>2</sup> the 1<sup>st</sup> 1781

DEAR GENERAL

Your favor of yesterday is this moment delivered to me and I will transmit the original to the next County Lieutenant to be read & forwarded — I judge that the 4<sup>th</sup> of the Militia of these 4 lower counties will not exceed 420 men — With you I think that Westmoreland Court house will be the most centrical for the double purpose of looking to the lower parts and also being ready to march upwards for the assistance of your neighborhood — I shall therefore propose that for the place of rendezvous for the draughted militia of these 4 lower counties in my letter accompanying yours to the lower Officers. there is no one County that will send more than a Majors command, and yet when assembled they will be enough for that of a Colonel, and too much for the abilities of our Militia Majors — I wish we had been so much attended to as

him should be appointed their Ambassadors at the Convention. To this request the Supreme Council returned the following Answer.

“*Libenter se facturos quod vellet Caesar. Eum autem obsecrabant ut primo exemplum afferret ubi unus inter Socios pro altero Legatos elegerat. Quippe quod prima facie indignum id suprema potestate concedendum et servitus speciem videretur. Responsuros se esse suis, et cavendum esset ne res inusitata et indigna suspectos se apud suos redderet et in vitae discrimen duceret.*

“They would willingly do what Caesar wisht. But they besought him to furnish them first with an example in which one Ally had named the Ambassadors of another. Since this appeared unworthy of an independent Power to allow & lookt like Slavery. That they were answerable to their Constituents for their conduct & must take care least a proceeding unexampled & disgraceful should render them suspected & endanger their lives.”

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. American Philosophical Society, Weedon Papers, No.

97.

<sup>2</sup> Written over “May.”



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

to have had a proper Commander sent to remain in those lower counties so long as the war raged in these parts — I had heard of the detachment sent down James river and concluded that it was designed for Potomac, but it being many days since & the fleet not appearing in Potomac yesterday, or to day that I have heard, I was willing to hope that they were forced southward by the successes of Gen. Green there joined to the apprehension of a french fleet. the slow advance of Cornwallis, or as we have been informed, his pointing towards Charlottsville, seemed to denote that he would not advance to the northern pa[r]ts of Virginia — 'Tis most clear that a few days will determine it, because it is certain that Cornwallis will not come north without having his ships in Potomac — This may be all otherwise when events come to be disclosed, however so it appears at present. We are in this county much better off for ammunition than any of our neighbors, and we have not ten rounds a man for our Militia — I dare say the people w<sup>d</sup> be very glad to get their property in a secure retreat, but where that will be if the enemy land in force in these lower parts I am sure I do not know — We have no Artillery, little ammunition, and as yet no Cavalry — And not an Officer of experience among us. Yet we must do the best — It seems pretty certain that a fleet for N. America sailed from Brest on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, so that we may expect aid from that quarter daily — Surely Gen. Wayne will be joined to the Marquis in a day or two, when I hope they will be able to make head against the enemy since they have divided their force — I am dear Sir sincerely.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO GENERAL [GEORGE] WEEDON <sup>1</sup>

June 2<sup>d</sup> 1781. 9 oClock saturday

SIR,

I have received your letter of yesterday by Express, and shall immediately call our whole Militia together and draw out one half of the armed men — I suppose they may amount to 200 or 250 men — Your letter shall instantly be transmitted to the Lieutenant of Richmond to be forwarded — I am not yet determined on the place of rendezvous, but I think at present that our first Station will be Prices ordinary or K. George Court house — however, I shall direct the Officer commanding detach<sup>t</sup> to inform you of the place where he is fixed at first — Plunder & revenge now direct the councils and conduct of our enemies as you justly observed.

I have the honor to be Sir your most obedient Servant.

TO ARTHUR LEE <sup>2</sup>

EPPING FOREST, June 4<sup>th</sup> 1781

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Having just written largely to Mr. Izard and inclosed him my last letters & Intelligence from the Marquis Fayette I refer you to him for an accurate knowledge of our present state — The enemy are within 30 miles of Fredericksb<sup>g</sup> & our army a little above them on their left flank but too weak to approach — No news of the Pennsylv<sup>a</sup> Line. We shall

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. American Philosophical Society, Weedon Papers, No. 98. Addressed, "Honorable General Weedon / at / Fredericksburg // by Express."

<sup>2</sup> Transcript. Virginia Historical Society, Leffingwell Collection. Addressed to him "in/Philadelphia" and sent by Colonel Loyeaute.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

receive all the injury possible before aid is sent to us — What will become of these lower parts heaven knows — We and our property here are now within the power of the enemy — Greater objects may perhaps, carry them upwards, but our situation is a very disagreeable one — We just hear that 1700 men have landed in Gloucester county — some of the last arrived reinforcement I suppose, as the chief part of that at Portsmouth — The enemies design seems to be by great distress and much delusion to bring over the minds of the people — it must be confessed that they have the fairest opportunity, for we have no press in the country, we have received next to no assistance from our Sister States or from our Ally, whilst our veteran regulars have been all sacrificed in the common cause, and a considerable part of our force, being the greatest part of Gen. Green's strength, now in S. Carolina —

The people feel their pressures, find themselves abandoned, and they are exposed to the infinite acts & fraud of our enemies and of our internal Tories — The consequences may be very displeasing to sound & sensible Whiggism. Shew this to Col<sup>o</sup> Bland & it will surely rouse him to exert all his powers in Congress to procure us assistance & that which may be effectual — The enemy affect to leave harmless the poor & they take everything from those they call the rich — Tis said that 2 or 3000 negroes march in their train, that every kind of Stock which they cannot remove they destroy — eating up the green wheat & by destroying of the fences, expose to destruction the other growing grains — they have burnt a great number of Warehouses full of Tob<sup>o</sup> and they are now pressing on to the large ones on Rappahanock & Potomac rivers and the valuable iron works in our northern parts. —

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

The fine horses on James river have furnished them with a numerous and powerful Cavalry — 'tis said to consist of 800 — I hope that these afflictions are intended to do away some of our overcharge of wickedness, and that we shall be relieved in due season —

Cornwallis is the Scourge — & a severe one he is — The doings of more than a year in the South are undoing very fast, whilst they rush to throw ruin into other parts.

I have got your keys from Richmond — Half of our Militia is this day to be drafted for the Marquis, but how to get at him I know not, as the enemy are between us and him —

Affectionately and Sincerely yours  
farewell —

P.S.

If you should get M<sup>r</sup> Parker's money he is willing that you should apply a part of it to getting Miss Matildas things — My Bark is almost gone & then — I shall go too —

TO GENERAL [GEORGE WEEDON]<sup>1</sup>

June 7<sup>th</sup> 1781.

DEAR GENERAL

Immediately on receipt of your letter last saturday I dispatched messengers to call our militia together on monday last — and your letter was forwarded to the Officers of the lower counties. Our militia met last monday, & were drafted to the number of 259 rank, and file — 96 march'd this morning from our court

<sup>1</sup> A. L. American Philosophical Society, Weedon Papers, No. 110. The handwriting, particularly after the first eight lines of the manuscript, evidences great haste and perturbation, some words being almost illegible, but the letter seems to be in Lee's autograph.

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house for prices ordinary where I expect they will be join'd by as many more as will amount in the whole to 200 well arm'd men at least—they will march forward to join you at Falmouth under the command of Col. A John Wash<sup>g</sup> Richmond has drafted 120 men—difficiencies must be expected. they march tomorrow. It is report only that tells us the Northumberland, & Lancaster Militias are in motion, but we do not know their numbers. I do conclude upon the whole you may expect 500 men from the 4 lower County's. & I hope they will be well arm'd, & provided.

Capt. Sael agreed with me in opinion, that it was better for our men to proceed to y<sup>r</sup> Camp, as they amountd either fully, or very near to a Batt<sup>n</sup> than to wait for the uncertain numbers of the lower Countys. We understand that the Enemy have taken a strong post on Gwin's [?] Is<sup>d</sup> & that they are very active in taking off Rappahanock Pilots especially, but that they also take away all the other Inhabitants they can seize on. What they mean by the last I cannot tell. The Pilots denote a push up Rappahanock. I suppose to burn the warehouses that are approachable. this moment a messenger arriv'd t[o] inform me, that a Ship & two small Vessells were at the mouth of Nominy in Powtomac. with the same views I suppose, as I have conjectured they mean to pursue in Rappah<sup>nc</sup>k burning, and plundering. we could but barely prevent this when all together, but how it will be now, when we have detatch't so many of our men & many of our best Officers, time must tell. I apprehend we shall be a good deal distres't. I hope that the encreas't force of the Marquis will enable him to expell the Enemy without much risk. Coll. Wa[sh]-ington is to be here this Evening. & I shall deliver him your letter by Cap. Sael. (?)



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY JUNE 12. 1781

MY DEAR SIR,

Altho our correspondence has been long interrupted I hope that our friendship never will, notwithstanding the arts of wicked men who have endeavored to create discord and dissention among the friends of America. For myself, having little but my good wishes to send you, it was not worth while to take up your attention a moment with them. The contents of this letter will I am sure require no apology, because you always approve that zeal which is employed in the public service, and has for its object the public good. The present state of our country Sir is such as to demand the most immediate and most effectual interposition to prevent the numerous resources of Virginia from becoming means in the hands of our enemies for subduing the liberties of North America.

For tho the efforts of this State have been not quite so strong as its abilities warranted, yet when it shall be placed under the sword of a Conqueror, such resources will be found, and such powers drawn from it, as will put the liberties of North America in eminent peril.

My following opinion is not founded upon vain apprehensions, but upon good materials and attentive observation. Virginia it is true has nine times the number of men that now threaten its ruin, but they are dispersed, unarmed, without system, government, and very little probability at present of the Legislature assembling. The enemies army is in the heart of the country, employing with exquisite industry every engine that force and fraud can move to effect a conquest of the whole or far greater part immediately. I think Sir that they will succeed if adequate prevention be not

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, L. 66.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

presently applied. When the enemies army began to move after the junction of their troops, in force much superior to the Marquis, the Assembly adjourned to Charlottesville, where they were never able to collect members sufficient to form the Legislature before they were dispersed by 500 of the enemies light horse with as many light infantry mounted behind as we learn from some of the flying delegates. The Governor had resigned his office, but no successor had been appointed, and M<sup>r</sup> Digges the Lieut. Governor it seems has been made a prisoner and released upon parole, whilst there is in the present state of things<sup>1</sup> little chance for a meeting of the Assembly to apply the feeble remedy which their choice of a Governor would amount to.

Thus, we remain without government at a time when the most wise and most vigorous administration of public affairs can alone save us from the ruin determined for us by the enemy. I have taken the liberty of communicating my thoughts on this subject to M<sup>r</sup> Lovell in a letter, copy of which I have now the honor to inclose you, together with a letter from your brother who agrees perfectly with me in sentiment, and I verily believe there is not a good citizen or friend to the liberty of America in this state who does not wish that the plan proposed may be immediately adopted. I have written in the same manner to Col<sup>o</sup> Bland and M<sup>r</sup> Jones our delegates in Congress. It would be a thing for angels to weep over, if the goodly fabric of human freedom which you have so well labored to rear, should in one unlucky moment be levelled with the dust. There is nothing I think more certain than that your personal call would bring into immediate exertion the force and the resource of this State and its neighboring ones, which directed as it would be will

<sup>1</sup> The words "in the present state of things" are inserted above the line.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

effectually disappoint and baffle the deep laid schemes of the enemy. By seizing the fine horses on James river they have mounted a gallant and most mischievous Cavalry of 5 or 600 in number. We have plenty of horses left to be sure, but we are deficient in proper accoutrements, tho I understand that the Marquis is endeavoring to mount a thousand men as quickly as possible to controul the boundless ravage of the enemies horse. Some of the dispersed delegates report it as extremely probable that our collected Stores in the north fork of James river have fallen into the enemies hands, as their cavalry were a little above, and the main body of their army not far below directing its course to the north fork, which was guarded only by 7 or 800 new levies under Baron Steuben

Our country is truly Sir in a deplorable way, and if relief comes not from you it will probably come not at all—I have heard it reported in this country that Gen. Wayne dislikes being commanded by the Marquis—if this should be unhappily true, the consequences will be obvious to you.

I have the honor to be with sentiments of the most perfect esteem dear Sir your most affectionate friend and most obedient Servant.

TO [JAMES LOVELL]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY June 12<sup>th</sup> 1781

MY DEAR SIR,

After acknowledging the receipt of your favor of May 29<sup>th</sup> last I beg you to accept my thanks for it—It is now a long time since I have been of opinion that our plan of secrecy in Congress was productive of con-

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, L. 68. Enclosed in the foregoing letter to Washington.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

sequences fatal to the American Cause and fertile of good to its enemies only — For whilst good men obey the injunction of secrecy, bad ones communicate without reserve such intelligence to our enemies as benefit them whilst the friends of America by being kept in the dark are exposed to ruin ere they are aware of danger — I have not been able to explain your enigmatical Letter by any communications that our delegates have made so far as their informations have reachd me. My mind is therefore perplexd with an infinity of doubts without having any certain clue to guide me thro' the Labarynth — I have not seen the Gazette you mention & therefore want my “pole” — but it is impossible for a person so attentive as I have always been not to know that the final & fierce designs of our Enemy's are levelled at us, and thro' us, I apprehend at the liberties of North America — for however feeble the resources of this Country may have been under republican Government, if once it is placed under the Sword of a Conqueror such efforts and such resources will appear as to put the liberties of the rest in very eminent peril. I love liberty and wish that the whole human race enjoy'd it; and I have a peculiar affection for that of the eastern part of this Union. Let me entreat you therefore Sir, & your worthy Associates from the east, not to slumber a moment over *our* present actual State; dication, dispatch, and much wisdom are indespensably necessary, or I verily believe we shall soon be lost to ourselves and to you. I do not write under any influences of vain apprehensions, but from the cool, considerate dictates of judgment, founded upon good materials. A very great majority of the people of this Country are good whigs & very determined to maintain their independence, and being so, how they came into their present state of thralldom is beside my present purpose to enquire. Like good physicians the Congress will



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consider that the inordinacy of the symptom must be subdued, before application can with safety be made to the cause. The fact is, the enemy by a quick collection of their force, & by rapid movements, are now in the center of Virginia with an army of regular infantry greater than that of the compounded regulars and militia commanded by the Marquis & with 5 or 600 excellent cavalry — that our new assembly has from various causes not yet convend — that before the Legislature had fully assembled at Charlottesville in the very heart of our Country they were dispersd by the british Cavalry 500 in number with as many mounted infantry — that Governor Jefferson having resignd, and no successor appointed, and the next to him in authority Mr Digges having been made prisoner, this Country is, in the moment of its greatest danger without government, abandond to the Arts & the Arms of the Enemy, both which are push'd with the greatest zeal & clearly see that in this State of things that wanting a rudder in the storm, the good Ship must inevitably be cast away — Congress alone can furnish the preventive — The temper of the people here, and a thousand other considerations point to the remedy — Let Gen. Washington be immediately sent to Virginia, with 2 or 3000 good Troops — Let Congress as the head of the Federal union, in this crisis, direct that until the Legislature can convene and a Governor be appointed, the General be possessed of Dictatorial powers, and that it be strongly recommended to the Assembly when conven'd to continue those powers for 6. 8 or 10 months as the case may be. And the General may be desired instantly on his arrival in Virginia to summon the members of both houses to meet where he shall appoint to organize and resettle their Government — You may be assured Sir, that if this is quickly done, and Arms & Amunition forwarded that the Enemies possessions in the South



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

will be very few, and the prospects they may propose to themselves from a Truce thus rendered abortive. Whilst this system is pushed, it will be of great consequence to press hard for a superior marine force to cover these Southern waters — I well know your philanthropy, and I am sure that you will exert every power you possess to prevent the immediate ruin of this State and of course the danger that will ensue to the rest — Let the friends to the South, and the eastern wise Men be assembled, and consider of this plan — let it be proposed and pushed into immediate execution in Congress — The time is short, the danger presses, and commensurate remedies are indispensable. The influence, the judgment, & the experience of General Washington will command infinite exertions here — but then he ought to be well supported with all that Congress can do. We have some reason to fear that our collected stores in the North forke of James River under protection of Baron Stuben with 7 or 800 Men new levies have been seized and destroyed by a superior force of the enemy — You advise me to use all my ‘Oratory’ — I have exerted every influence to secure my Country, and those among whom I live are sufficiently Zealous, but the people of this Country are dispersed over a great extent of Land and unhappily we have no press in the State, as we hear that the last remaining one has been destroyed near Charlottesville — God bless you — Let other business sleep until this is put in a full and fair way.

Sincerely and affectionately yours. —

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO GENERAL [GEORGE WEEDON]<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR GENERAL

June 25<sup>th</sup> 1781

Agreeable to your call the one half of our militia are ordered to march tomorrow, amounting to 259 men rank & file, better armed and supplied in other respects than is usual with militia — the Officers in general are good, and assure me that they will remember the honor of Westmoreland and the good of their country — This will be delivered to you by M<sup>r</sup> John Monroe of this county — the young gentleman had the honor of a command in one of our minute corps at the beginning of the war, and deserves a much better situation than that of a private centinal — I know your disposition to befriend merit, nor do I doubt your friendly inclination to oblige me, and I assure you that I shall be singularly obliged by your kind attention to M<sup>r</sup> Monroe — he wishes to serve his country, and in a way more suitable to his past command than that of a rank & file man — I am sure that if you can contrive it, you will, in such a manner that he may be put to Service in a way more worthy of him — And that for this purpose he will have your own good will and that of your friends in the army — I have the honor to be my dear General your friend & obedient Servant.

TO DR. THOMAS THOMPSON<sup>2</sup>

SIR

June 30<sup>th</sup> 1781

His excellency the Gov<sup>r</sup> having received information that a number of men have deserted from the Army

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. American Philosophical Society, Weedon Papers, No. 139. Endorsed with an erroneous date "Westmoreland 5 June." For Weedon's reliance on Lee, see Weedon's letter in R. H. Lee, *Memoirs of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. copy. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Transcripts. Thompson was keeper of Nominy Ferry, and this letter was written to him in

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

and Navy of his most Christian Majesty in America, whom the Commanding Officers are very anxious to have apprehended; and his Excellency having charged me to give orders at the several Ferry's in this County, that all foreigners offering to cross at them having the appearance of soldiers or seamen, shall be examined with great strictness, and if there be good reason to believe them to be deserters that they be stopped and secured, You are hereby directed to observe a conduct conformable to the Governor's orders in the premises at your Ferry, and to cause persons of the above description to be secured and delivered to the officer of the Guard upon the Canoes at Nominy Ferry, who is hereby commanded to receive all such into his safe keeping under a military guard, untill he shall inform me thereof, or the Commanding Officer of the County, and receive farther Orders concerning such prisoners.

I am Sir your very humble servant.

### TO GENERAL [GEORGE WEEDON]<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR GENERAL

CHANTILLY July 1<sup>st</sup> 1781

By a letter that accompanies this you will see that I had written to you with design that my letter should go by Col<sup>o</sup> Nelson, but the Colonel had left Leeds before the letter reached there—I am now to acknowledge & to thank you for your last favor—Our lookouts are directed to be vigilant and give immediate notice of the appearance of a hostile fleet, which intelligence shall quickly be conveyed to you after it comes here—I shall this day write to Col<sup>o</sup> Gaskins<sup>2</sup>

pursuance of an order of Governor Jefferson to Lee as County Lieutenant of Westmoreland, sent May 29, 1781. Lee signs as "C. L. W."

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. American Philosophical Society, Weedon Papers, No. 147.

<sup>2</sup> The reading of this word is uncertain.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

requesting that Lookouts may be placed on the Bay shore and notice given — this precaution seems now the more necessary, as well as a diligent preparation on our part, from the present situation of the enemy — The inclosed letter from the Marquis will shew you how things were three days ago — I judge that when the enemy can no longer make head in the field against our army, that they will retire to some stronghold from whence strong detachments will be Water borne to harrass, distress, and ruin the Country as much as possible — this is in perfect coincidence with the vile accrimonious enmity they bear us. And renders it necessary I think that we should be armed at all points. I wish that Lord Cornwallis may have many more and more powerful similar reasons for a *vehemence* of expression — We are told here that M<sup>r</sup> Jenifer of Congress has written to his brother that N. York is certainly evacuated by the enemy, their cannon spiked &c. — is this true — if it is, either the Southern war is to be pushed at all hazards and with their whole force, or else they mean to quit the 13 States — the last is hardly a supposable case when we consider the Bull dog nature of our enemies. I have no gunpowder & our people scantily provided with cartridges — they waste them immoderately — I furnished 10 rounds a piece to those men lately drafted & they did not return three of them — Can I have powder, and Cartridge paper With a few good arms? It is unfortunate that our Counties have not a Field piece or two — If you have an Express going in a day or two to Philadelphia be pleased to send the inclosed by him, but if no Express goes so soon, be kind enough to send the letter by the next post.

I have the honor to be yours sincerely.

Have you any views?

CHANTILLY, July.

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# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO WILLIAM LEE <sup>1</sup>

VIRGINIA July 15<sup>th</sup> 1781

MY DEAR B.

Your letters of July & August 1780 & feb<sup>y</sup> 81 are but just come to hand, the two former near a year after date — It is this length of time before letters arrive, the uncertainty of their arriving, and the few opportunities that occur here which discourages writing, or you sh<sup>d</sup>. certainly have heard from me as often as you would choose. I thought it necessary that you should know as soon as possible in what manner you have been affected by the military operations of the enemy in this State w<sup>ch</sup> you will see by the enclosed account from Valentine your present steward who succeeded upon the death of Ellis — All that I can say is, that every precaution for security was taken that could have been which has occasioned your loss to be so much less than that of others in similar circumstances of situation &c.

Your neighbors Col<sup>o</sup> Taliaferro & Col<sup>o</sup> Travis lost every slave they had in the world, and M<sup>r</sup> Paradise has lost all his but one — This has been the general case of all those who were near the enemy — The information given of enemies designs by Le Baron De Guern has been verified most exactly, but the intelligence came too late. Had it come sooner it would have been next to an impossibility to have prevented your loss for reasons that you shall know hereafter. — The enemies Generals here appear to carry on the war much more upon views of private plunder & enriching individuals, than upon any plan of national advantage — This seems to be demonstrated by Lord Cornwallis

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy. Virginia Historical Society, Copies of Letters to Landon Carter. Addressed to Lee "at Bruxels to the/Care of." Endorsed, "Rec<sup>d</sup> 10 Mar. 1782/Ans<sup>d</sup> 11 Do. Do."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

quitting all that he had been laboring for in the south during more than a year, and leaving all that he had been doing to be undone by Gen. Greene; which has been rapidly and effectually executed by this General of the United States,—whilst the British General has been traversing an undefended part of Virginia, with an army employed in taking off Negroes plate &c & destroying Corn, Cattle, & Tob<sup>o</sup>.—Our regular force had been sent south, and so soon as our Militia could be collected and joined by a few regular Corps from the Army, his Lordship rapidly retreated in search of safety between the wide rivers where his Ships were ready to take him out of the way of danger.

Our light parties came up with him at y<sup>r</sup> Holwater plantation and again between G. Spring & James Town where warm rencontres ensued, to the British loss of between 4 & 500 in killed & wounded, on the American side about 150 killed, wounded, & missing. Immediately after the last action, the enemy crossed James river in the *night* of the 7<sup>th</sup> instant, and we learn are marching to Portsmouth, where we understand they mean to embark for N. York leaving a garrison in that Defile—This is a curious kind of war to wage, and worthy to be sure of the honor of a great King & a powerful Nation. O Britain how art thou fallen! When our brother D<sup>r</sup> Lee returned to Phil<sup>a</sup> in April, I gave him Con. Loan office certificates of yours for 68100 dollars, 1600 of which carried interest payable in Paris—I requested him to sell these upon the best terms he could & remit you the money—if it can be done, he will do it.

The interest in sterling that has accrued due upon the 1600 dollar certificates I had received bills of exchange for from the Continental Loan Office for Nine hundred & sixty Livres Tournois, which bills I delivered to our brother Arthur to be transmitted to

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

you from Philadelphia, which I have no doubt but he will do.—The enemy have not injured your crops at the different plantations which are at present very good —

In their first visit they took 60 head of Cattle away. With our best love to our Sister & Cousins I am your affectionate brother & faithful friend.

TO [COLONEL WILLIAM DAVIES?] <sup>1</sup>

EPPING FOREST August 22<sup>d</sup> 1781

SIR,

I am this moment honored with your letters of the 6<sup>th</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> instant, with their inclosures, which I shall give due attention to, and more fully answer by another opportunity, as the express is in haste.

The returns of our men, arms, & ammunition shall hereafter be made in the form that you desire. The arms that were formerly supplied, added to 55 stands which I lately received from Gen. Weedon,<sup>2</sup> have well armed our militia in Westmoreland. I wish we were as well off for ammunition, experienced officers, cannon, and cavalry. Perhaps you may soon have an opportunity of sending ammunition to Gen. Weedon at Fredericksburg by some return Waggon, and we can readily get it from him. if the powder & lead is unfixed, we shall greatly want cartridge paper.

Unless we had public furbishers & a public magazine, the public arms that we have received from time

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, III. No. 58. Davies was Commissioner of the War Office. He had been recommended to Congress for this position by Governor Thomas Jefferson, March 26, 1781. H. A. Washington, *Works of Jefferson*, I. 301.

<sup>2</sup> See his letter of August 2, 1781, to Lee, printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 206.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

to time, must have been spoiled. And therefore I have heretofore delivered them to the captains taking their receipts, and directing a receipt from each man who received a public arm, and frequent inspection into the condition of them — When future deliveries shall take place I will endeavor to follow your ideas respecting the securities. Whenever the Commissioners shall apply to me I will certainly give them my best advice, and when any thing shall pass under my observation that I think deserves your notice I will do myself the honor to communicate to you. Most certainly, such specifics as cannot in due season be brought into use at the army had better be sold than spoil as frequently hath been the case to the injury of the public and so as to have produced reflections upon the inattention of Government — There is nothing here so necessary, in my opinion, for each county to be furnished with from such sales, as military Stores, arms, ammunition, & field pieces, with drums, colors &c &c — At present I do not recollect any person with us more fit for the office of recruiting Officer than Lieu<sup>t</sup> George Garner of our militia, but I do not know that he will accept the appointment — perhaps the best way would be to send me a blank commission and I will fill it with the best man I can get — By letter from the Marquis of the 20<sup>th</sup> instant I learn that the enemy, leaving but a feeble garrison in Portsmouth, have collected their whole force in Gloucester county near Gloucester Town, having left the York side — he expects shortly a strong attempt upon some quarter — That the Northern neck may be that quarter is not very unlikely — many objects are on Potomac river — It must be confessed that we are here in a very poor condition to meet such a storm, altho some of us have long foreseen it, and have endeavored to be prepared, but our unaided efforts have been insufficient. Gen.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Weedon was lately here after passing thro the lower counties of this neck, and we formed a plan of defence, which, if it were supported by government would enable us to stay a little the progress of evil, until we could get assistance. Northumberland & Richmond have already a Troop of horse by government sanction, had we that sanction & commissions in Westm<sup>d</sup> Lancaster, & King George, we sh<sup>d</sup> in the 5 counties have 90 horse, which with one half of our Infantry amounting to 1100 pretty well armed as we can arm them, if supplied with ammunition & the whole conducted by an experienced gen. Officer on the spot, & with some field pieces, would place us in a tolerable posture—Gen. Weedon promised without delay to lay this plan before government, & I beg leave to recommend it to your patronage that it may receive such speedy consummation as the vicinity of the enemy demands.

I have the honor to be with singular esteem & regard Sir your most obedient humble Servant.

P. S. I lately wrote to the Governor for some blank Militia commissions of which we are in great want, but hitherto I have received no answer. Will you be pleased to remind the Governor of it?

TO THOMAS McKEAN<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR SIR,      CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA Aug<sup>t</sup> 25. 1781

I am greatly obliged to you for your very friendly letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> instant by my brother. The nature

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, McKean Collection, I. 92. Addressed, "His Excellency / Thomas M. Kean Esq<sup>r</sup> / of Congress / Philadelphia." McKean was President of Congress in 1781.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of the business that now demands your attention is too well known to me to admit a supposition that your friends can be made happy with long letters from you—for my own part, I shall be contented & thankful, for hearing from you now & then when a good opportunity, and most leisure permits. It gives me real pleasure to find you among the very few of those original patriots whom the gratitude of Congress has distinguished. I hope you will continue to be rewarded with the honors and the esteem of your country which you have so well merited. We have had a full share, I believe more than a sixth part, of the calamities of war, and much more, it seems, is intended for us. I don't suppose that our enemies intend by this to do us honor, but abundant in malice as they are, it may be concluded that they proportion their resentment to the merit of those they aggrieve. When it is considered that almost the whole burden of the southern war has lain upon Virginia, that many of her people are now actually defending South Carolina, I hope we shall not be left to struggle alone against the principal efforts of the enemy. Congress will no doubt consider this as a valuable member of the union, and govern themselves accordingly with respect to the timely and effectual aid that they give us. It is now no secret that the enemy mean to employ their greatest efforts against Virginia this fall and next winter. I suppose that Spain, as usual, will come in *very late* in the eleventh hour. I wish she felt some of our distress, I think it would stimulate to greater & quicker exertions.

Holland is an immense heap of Mammon, where every weakness prevails consequent upon excessive wealth.

I hope Congress has seen the propriety of cultivating with assiduity the Courts of Berlin & Petersburg. The Emperors subjects are certainly capable of



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being benefitted by a trade immediately with North America. One observation more and I have done, Great Britain (or rather its Ministers)<sup>1</sup> delude the people of Europe with an infinity of falsehoods concerning the successful progress of their arms in America — It is probable that if the true state of affairs here were carefully and quickly transmitted to Europe, and diligently circulated in the best European papers, that money for the war could not be raised by the English Ministry, and thus their malice being compelled to yield to their necessities, we might be happy in a safe and honorable peace. Cannot a few packet boats be continually going with<sup>2</sup> authenticated accounts of military events. It ought to be soon and well made known in Europe, that instead of conquering the southern States this Campaign, our enemies have nearly lost all that they had gained by 18 months war.

I am dear Sir, with the sincerest esteem and regard, your faithful and affectionate friend.

P.S.

My brother Francis thanks you for your kind remembrance of him.

TO [WILLIAM DAVIES?]<sup>3</sup>

WESTMORELAND Sept<sup>r</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> 1781

SIR,

Your favor of the 31<sup>st</sup> Ultimo is this moment put into my hands, and fortunately our whole militia is to

<sup>1</sup> The words in parentheses are inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> The word "the," following this word, is erased.

<sup>3</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection. Endorsed, Sept<sup>r</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> 1781 / From Colo R. H. / Lee informing that the Militia of Westmoreland / are on their march, & / proposing a plan / to secure the naviga / tion of our Bay & rivers / & re-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

meet tomorrow in consequence of former orders, so that as little time as possible will be lost in sending forward our militia to the Camp in Gloucester. I am no stranger to the fortunate event which has rendered this call necessary, and I hope that the spirit of our countrymen will be roused to exertions adequate to the great purposes that an opportunity is now presented of accomplishing. I know that all the ideas which I am now going to suggest, come not properly within those of your department, but I cannot help here throwing them out that you may take occasion to mention them to the Governor and Council. The widows mite was once acceptable, and in our system, the giving attention to all hints that may be offered, will probably be productive of consequences very salutary on many occasions —

We have two very important points to manage — the recovery of our finances, and the secure navigation of our Bay — It seems to me that the arrival of the fleet of our Ally and the probable consequences thereof will put it in our power to do both — The capture of armed Vessels of different kinds, and Transports from the enemy, may enable us immediately, by securing some of the former, to take and keep the secure navigation of the Bay — And the possession of a proper number of Transports & their being quickly loaded with public Tobacco and immediately dispatched to Holland may lay the foundation of a Loan of Specie sufficient to purchase up the greater part, if not the whole of those paper bills that constitute so great and oppressive a part of our national debt — My design of being so quick in the transportation of Tob<sup>o</sup> to Holland is,

ducing the quantity / of paper money in cir / culation. / Answ<sup>d</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> 1781. The letter could scarcely be to General Weedon. See his letter of “20 Sept., 1781” to Lee in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 200.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that the State may avail itself of the present & of the rising Market before individual Traders under a free navigation can fill the foreign markets—I should suppose that there would be no difficulty in obtaining from our Ally<sup>1</sup> a frigate or two to convoy these Tob<sup>o</sup> loaded ships off the coast—And above all it is indispensably necessary to exclude totally from this operation all private jobs and private views of every kind—Let the person trusted with this business in Holland be a man of sure probity of character, of discretion, knowledge of Trade, secrecy, and activity, and of undoubted affection to America. Some States by a prudent conduct of this kind, have already freed themselves from the expenses of the war, and their people will bless their Rulers as they find themselves at the end of a long war free, happy, and discharged from oppressive taxes and ruinous systems—Willing to discharge your express immediately I have written in great haste, but I think the principles laid down are good, and that in good hands they may be improved to great national benefits,—

I am, with much esteem, Sir your most obedient humble Servant.

TO [COLONEL WILLIAM DAVIES?]<sup>2</sup>

EPPING FOREST Sept<sup>r</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> 1781

SIR,

My son will have the honor of delivering you this letter—he comes to Richmond upon some business of his Uncles, and by him I take an opportunity of paying my respects to you. The ideas that I had the

<sup>1</sup> The words “from our Ally” are inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, III. 59.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

honor of suggesting to you in my letter by your return Express relative to the security of our Bay shores and navigation, as well as the means of retrieving our ruined finances, I beg leave again to press upon your mind, that they may in time be considered by the Executive. It seem very probable that many Vessels will be captured from the enemy by the french fleet that may be purchased from them, and which will suit admirably for cruising in the Bay and within the mouths of our rivers to suppress the piratical practices that will undoubtedly commence again so soon as the french fleet goes away. I am well informed that several companies are forming on the eastern Shores of this State & Maryland & on the Tangiers to carry on this infamous and distressing plan of plunder. And they will certainly do great injury in this way before our State can build & equip vessels to suppress them — And by building alone it can be done, if this opportunity of getting captured vessels from our Ally should be lost — I think there are two or three very handsome Vessels ready armed for the purpose at Frazers ferry that were captured by the French 74 gun ship in the winter. I pray you Sir to press this business upon the government with all the earnestness that a plan deserves which must secure our extensive shores from endless plunder, our trade from molestation, and the public from the great constant expence of Militia guards along the Shores of the Bay & rivers. In fact it is for the honor of government as well as greatly for the interest of the people. I am not aware of any sound objection to the plan proposed for retrieving our finances, unless it shall be said that Seamen cannot be got for the purpose — But I should suppose that an active, intelligent person in this way, going to Baltimore & Philadelphia, might procure Seamen enough for the purpose — Can no method be fallen upon to introduce a cautious, checked



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

system for granting discharges to Soldiers from the army. And this system printed & sent to the different County Lieutenants, that they may be able to judge properly when discharges are rightly given? From my own experience I know that the difficulty at present is so great that I am frequently perplexed to determine<sup>1</sup> what judgement to form in cases that come before me — I have been informed that in the European armies, systems of this sort have been carefully introduced from the numberless abuses that had there taken place — And that besides numerous checks, none but high officers are permitted to grant discharges. It seems to be very necessary here where we get men at so great expence and with so much difficulty — There was lately a deserter brought before me who will be sent immediately to the army, and who informed me that he certainly knew one William Perry to be a deserter — that he had enlisted for the war, and that he now keeps Tavern at Rocky Ridge — Perry belonged to Cap<sup>t</sup> Fitzgeralds company the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment of our Continentals — Will it not be well to enquire into this, as the man lives near you — I had lately the honor to inform you that I was in great want of blank Militia Commissions, their being many Officers lately Nominated by the Court & who are now going to the Gloucester Camp with<sup>t</sup> Commissions & who complain heavily that they have them not. — You Sir will know the propriety of having them, for many reasons, but especially in case of captivity. Be so kind Sir, if it be possible, to let me have some by the return of My Son, who will take charge of any commands you may have for me — I am, with much esteem, Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

Three companies of 68 men each rank & file well

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “know” erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

armed will march from hence next friday morn for the Gloucester camp — The Marquis sent me a verbal message by a Gentleman the other day, desiring that all the Flour that could be got might be sent round to James river for the Army, as the mills in that part were stopt for want of water — I fear that this article may be wanted, and I think that a few hundred bushels of wheat might be quickly put into flour here and sent round, if I had Government powers to impress wheat, Mills, & Vessels to transport it.

I have not the Continental Articles of War nor do I know the present legal Ration for the Militia.<sup>1</sup>

TO THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMIES  
OF THE UNITED STATES<sup>2</sup>

[GEORGE WASHINGTON]

EPPING FOREST 17<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> 1781

DEAR SIR,

I had the honor of replying to your polite and agreeable letter of July the 15<sup>th</sup> by my son Ludwell who expected either to wait on you with it in Virginia or to get the letter forwarded by the Marquis de la Fayette.

Altho I am at this time laboring under a severe fit of the gout, it is impossible to refrain from congratulating you, and rejoicing with our country, on the present happy and glorious prospect before us. The very judicious and decisive step that you have taken

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph is written, after the signature to the postscript, in six lines on one side of the Manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LII. 149. Addressed, "His Excellency / General Washington, Commander in chief of the Armies of the United States / and of the Allied forces near / York // favored by M<sup>r</sup> Lee."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

in coming here, seems to put it out of the power of fortune to prevent the enemy in this state from falling into your hands. At least my mind can reach but to two preventatives, the coming of naval aid from Europe which is hardly possible; and the want of provisions for our good Allies and ourselves, which cannot be probable. A proper watch will surely be kept upon marine motions in Europe, to prevent the repetition of such scenes as the relieving of Gibraltar; and it is inadmissible that in this land of abundance so disgraceful a thing should happen as the dispersion of a force collected for our salvation for want of provisions which now the country abounds with! I assure you Sir, the Commissaries and Quartermasters departments in this state, so far as I have observed them, have in every thing been the reverse of right, insomuch that I have been well informed the few troops with the Marquis have frequently felt distress for want of provisions! — At present, the land and sea force that may come to lean on these broken staffs will probably reach to 45 or 50,000 men. We have now a good character at the head of our State War office, and I make no doubt but that he will exert all his powers with diligence — To prevent however the greatest of misfortunes, want of success from want of provisions, cant we add some methods not destructive of the present plans, and which may aid their deficiency? Suppose immediate notice were given to the possessors of good merchant mills, that they should be paid with specie for the flour they brought to your army and the navy, and a better price for it the sooner it reached; and wherever a competent person would undertake in a reasonable time to deliver a proper quantity, let his mill and waggons have protection from the destructive talons of Impressors — Upon these last let me make one observation for all — Their gripe generally squeezes the best citi-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

zens and leaves the rest, and is always executed for the greater ease and profit of the Impressor: so that now the people in general are exerting their wits to elude and hide their property from these characters. To prevent this plan from being executed with partiality, and upon views of job, some men having knowledge of the country, of honor, integrity, and diligence, should be employed to ride thro the upper counties, and see as much flour dispatched as possible. With regard to the hard money, I suppose that our Allies will furnish a sufficiency for their own supply, which will leave no great matter for us, and this, if we are rightly informed here, our Congress Financiers might furnish since the return of Col<sup>o</sup> Laurens from France.

The present mode of getting beef from the several circles would answer if diligently executed — but to aid this, for health as well as plenty, suppose that an active Justice of the peace, first Militia Officer, and one of the delegates, in each county; or any two of the three were by government immediately empowered and exhorted to proceed with diligence and take one half of the bacon and salt beef in possession of every family, and dispatch it in pressed waggons, Carts, or Vessels immediately to the army. The season now is, when persons in the country may find many resources besides salted meat to subsist upon. In short victory must not be prevented by want of victuals, and these must be obtained at any rate. Altho I have seen the baneful influence of these impresses, yet upon this great and apparently final occasion, it seems admissible to extend a little under proper direction, not to destroy the present system. I mean in this exigence to aid not to annihilate now the old imperfect plan. I should suppose that if specie pay were promised, that the fleet might be well furnished with vegetables from the water bound counties. I assure your Excellency that I should

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not have troubled you or roused from my present state to make these observations, if it were not because of my great anxiety lest we should fail of the happy end before us for want of provisions. And upon this principle I am sure of your pardon. But now that I am thus engaged, permit me to make a few observations upon the negroes now with the enemy in case of the surrender of the latter — I have been told that it is fixed, but whether by civil or military power I know not — that the owners, or any other person may have the Slaves, on paying £5 specie into the public treasury for each. It would seem that the unfortunate owners should be relieved upon terms as easy as possible — The Admiralty has some regulations upon subjects taken within their province, but how they apply to this case I see not. And I believe that the singular manner in which Great Britain has conducted this war against America, leaves no clue to direct us in former practise. force, fraud, intrigue, theft, have all in turn been employed to delude these unhappy people, and to defraud their masters! My brother William has lost sixty five, among whom are about 45 valuable grown slaves and useful Artisans. I would say nothing in his favor from his many other losses, or the personal injuries that have befallen him from his attachment to his native country — General systems will be applied to general subjects, and I shall be content with those that you establish — I would only observe that he is now upon the Continent of Europe, where he has been detained by the disagreeable consequences that might follow the committing his wife and children to the sea in these precarious times, and the necessity of his presence with them in a foreign land, where he is sufficiently distressed for their support — the profits of his estate here having been all put into the Loan Office and his numerous debts in England not recoverable at

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present — He has now no day in their Courts and no lawyer has been found that would bring suit for him. Perhaps it will be thought equitable, if any salvage is demanded, to allow Absentees a reasonable indulgence for payment. I have the honor to be with the most perfect esteem Sir Your Excellencies most affectionate and obedient Servant.

avored by }  
M<sup>r</sup> Lee }

TO — — —<sup>1</sup>

WESTM<sup>d</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 5. 1781

DEAR SIR,

I am favored by M<sup>r</sup> Monroe with yours of yesterday and a letter from Col<sup>o</sup> Parker. My brother D<sup>r</sup> Lee is at present in Prince William County so that he is deprived of an opportunity of writing by you — Since my brother left England I have no Correspondents there, nor have I many upon the Continent of Europe — To my brother William, to M<sup>r</sup> John Adams the Amer. Minister in Holland, and if you judged it expedient to M<sup>r</sup> Schweighauser Merchant in Nantes, I could write with pleasure, but at this moment, as M<sup>r</sup> Monroe is in haste, I have not time — If you could do me the pleasure of a visit in a few days I may have an opportunity of writing to these gentlemen, and also of answering my friend Col<sup>o</sup> Parkers letter — I am dear Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [COLONEL WILLIAM DAVIES?]<sup>1</sup>

SIR,

WESTMORELAND Oct<sup>r</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> 1781

I am honored with your favors of Sept<sup>r</sup> the 25<sup>th</sup> and October the 1<sup>st</sup>, for the latter I thank you & I will discharge the duties of the former to the utmost of my power. I am not unapprized of the distressed state of our finances, but extraordinary exertions must be made or they will grow worse, even to ruin. My plan consisted of two parts, the one for the restoration of our finances, the other, for the security of the people, and of course for the honor of government. The last would not probably be productive of very great expence, at least the expence would probably not be commensurate to the benefits, which at once comprehend security to the people and safety to the commerce of the State. I mean the proposal to purchase ready fitted Vessels to cruise in our Bay and entrance of our rivers to suppress small privateers and piratical vessels that have obstructed Commerce, plundered the shores, and created great expence of Militia to give ineffectual security. I admit with the Commercial Agent (of whose diligence & ability I have a high opinion) that the difficulty of getting Seamen will be great, but he will agree with me that the two difficulties are greater than one; that we may more easily get Seamen than build vessels and get Seamen besides — The fact is, that if we do not mean to have our trade destroyed, our shores evacuated and destroyed, we must exert every effort to obtain some marine security. The difficulties I know are great, but I apprehend not so great as to be unsurmountable by zeal, wisdom, and

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, III. 60. Endorsed "Oct<sup>r</sup> 7-1781 ~/From Col<sup>o</sup> R. H. Lee/recommending the/purchasing prize vessels/for the security of our/Bay and rivers —"

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

well directed industry. The plan of transmitting our Tobacco for the purpose of a pledge to borrow money upon for the redemption of our ruined finances is a greater object ; and will require much wisdom in the design,<sup>1</sup> and very great integrity, celerity, and secrecy in the execution. But experience has proved that it is not impracticable. In public as well as in private life I dislike being in debt, but in both cases debt may with advantage be incurred ; and here perhaps we may find a singular instance of being indebted to a foreign power with advantage<sup>2</sup> for the purpose of accomplishing the two beneficial purposes that I have suggested — But then, the disadvantage of foreign debt, especially between State & State, can only be compensated by wisdom in the purpose and honesty in the execution — When I came to retirement from Congress in 1779 I found our Militia in a very weak & defenceless condition — I applied to the then Board of War for materials of defence, they kindly furnished some things and desired we would procure others and rely upon the public support — Encouraged by this, our Officers prevailed with workmen to make Cartridge boxes where they could not otherwise be obtained, and lately the Auditors have refused paying for some of these — I applaud the circumspection of the Auditors, but where they throw difficulties in the way of our defence in a state of war, I fear that they misapply their caution and aid the enemy to effect our destruction — for surely such checks must discourage the efforts of those who mean firmly & effectually to resist the variety of wickedness with which we are encompassed.

I understand that the Assembly will adjourn to Nov<sup>r</sup>, before which time I shall endeavor to comply fully with your Official directions.

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “ plan ” erased.

<sup>2</sup> The words “ with advantage ” are inserted above the line.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I have the honor to be with great esteem Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMIES  
OF THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup>

[GEORGE WASHINGTON]

CHANTILLY October the 12<sup>th</sup> 1781

DEAR SIR.

I had the honor of addressing you last by eldest son who went to camp about four weeks ago. since that we have had the pleasure of hearing that your advances against York go successfully on. by this time I hope his Lordship begins seriously to repent the Quixote part that he has been acting in America. Surely the rage of despotism must be cooled by the total defeat of those great hopes which has been entertained of southern conquest. tho really, in all the outrage of passion that history presents, we see nothing equal to the tyrannous and senseless rancour of the british king and counsels against America. this disposition may continue a hopeless ruinous war. I see that Arnold, in the true spirit of apostacy, is burning and wasting his native country. the malice of that man, his wickedness, and his avarice, render him a fit instrument for such employers. his former success in this state, his restless search after gain however obtained, and the general languor that will be found here after the present exertions are over, will most likely be persuasives -- with gen. Clinton and himself to cause the coming of this unprincipled person with his

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LII. 309. Addressed, "His Excellency General Washington/Commander in Chief of the Armies/of the United States/York//favored by/Colo T. A. Washington."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

1500 or 2000 plunderers to Virginia when the fleet and army shall be gone. the learned and judicious Polybius was of opinion that the principal inducing motive with Alexander the great for invading Persia, was the little resistance that the 10,000 grecians met with in passing thro that great empire. weakness joined with the possession of property are certainly strong temptations to ambitious avaricious men. how best to prevent Richmond from experiencing in November the same disgraceful visit that it did in january, your wisdom can best determine. Perhaps two strong frigates under protection of a small and well fortified garrison at the Town of York, with Gen Spotswoods & Col<sup>o</sup> Meads legions made complete by the addition of some regular soldiers, might operate to discourage such attempts with the force that can be prudently spared from the garisons of N. York & Charles Town. Or if attempted, might be sufficient with militia aid to repel the invaders. It is not easy to conceive the distress and injury that have been derived to this state from the number of piratical plunderers that have infested the shores of this country since our gallies were laid down! And such has been the success and benefit attending this wicked practise, that we hear of small crews forming in various parts to go plundering along the shores. in the actual state of our affairs it will be long before we can build and fit vessels to stop these pernicious and disgraceful practises; but I should suppose that our government might have credit enought to purchase from among the captured armed vessels at York, some ready fitted swift sailing Cruisers for the purpose of scouring our bay and rivers, and suppressing these piratical proceedings. if such a plan should meet your Excellencies approbation, your recommendation of it will secure its adoption. I know there will be difficulty in getting seamen—but since the security of



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our country renders marine defence indispensable, and since the single difficulty of getting seamen, is far less than getting them and building and fitting the vessels besides; it would seem prudent to get the Vessels, and diligently apply at the ports of neighboring states for a few good seamen, less than a third of which description, with the rest landmen, would well answer our purpose. I cannot help thinking that this method, aided by a well conceived law for the speedy and capital punishment of such offenders, would contribute to lessen greatly, if not to suppress a practise extremely injurious to those who live near the water, and destructive to the commerce of the State. We are anxiously waiting for the rejoicing time to come when L<sup>d</sup> Cornwallis & his people will be your prisoners. I am dear Sir, with particular esteem and regard your affectionate and obedient Servant.

TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

[THOMAS NELSON]

SIR,

CHANTILLY October the 28<sup>th</sup> 1781

Immediately upon receiving your Excellencies letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> instant by express I put the two warrants of impress inclosed in your favor of Sept<sup>r</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> into the hands of discreet active men to proceed along the shores of Potomac & Rappahanock rivers as high as Leeds on the latter and upper Matchodique on the former, to impress all the old corn and fodder that could be spared convenient to navigation for the purpose of forage so much wanted by the army. these gentlemen have already secured upon Potomac 600 barrels of old corn & 31500 bundles of blades; upon

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, III. 61.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Rappahanock 765 barrels of corn, 60 bushels of oats, 87000 bundles of blades, & 30,000 pounds w<sup>t</sup> of hay — all which remains yet with the respective owners, except a small quantity of the late impressed corn on Potomac that will be added to the specific corn & meal now loading on board a vessel sent up for forage. The capitulation of York has occasioned me to desire that this business shal stop until I hear further from your excellency. By the removal of the army from York I suppose that forage is not wanted there, and the Squire tells me that for the purpose of supplying the wants of the ravaged counties near York, that the abundant crops up James and York rivers will furnish plenty at much less expence of carriage being nearer. As this business of pressing does give great and general uneasiness, I have thought it most advisable to desist from the further impressing<sup>1</sup> of forage and from the execution of that part of your letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> which directed that all the corn hay & fodder might be collected for public use that this part of the country can spare. If it shall be your opinion that it is unnecessary to proceed under the present circumstances, and that the articles already impressed may be disposed of by their owners you will please to inform me by the first opportunity — but if no opportunity occurs that will certainly deliver your letter, to avoid the expence of an Express, I will if you please, consider it as your desire that the impressing shall be discontinued and that the articles already impressed & remaining with the Owners shall be given up if I do not hear anything to the contrary from you in ten days from the date of this letter.

Since my arrival from Congress in 1779 I have used every possible means to get the militia of Westmoreland well armed, as the people were exposed for 40

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for "collection" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

miles along the shores of Potomac to be plundered and injured by the small piratical vessels of the enemy & of the Tories — This was happily effected, and the militia was well armed when the orders of government lately came to detach a part for the Gloucester camp. Two hundred men were ordered from this country, and our best arms were put into their hands — they were directed to serve two months, and consequently remained in Gloucester until the siege of York was ended. It therefore became unnecessary to disarm them, and yet under pretence of executing an order of government for stopping the public arms of returning militia, which was plainly designed only to apply where the men were departing before the siege ended, our militia have been disarmed ; at least such as have already come home, and thus the labor of more than two years has been frustrated, and the people here left exposed upon the water in a defenceless condition ! I hope Sir that you will have the goodness to order this matter to be rectified, and to direct that we may have a like number of good arms returned to us for those that have been taken from us. It evidently must operate to the discouragement of Officers and men, if the former who take pains to get their men armed, and the soldiers who keep their arms in order, shall find them taken away, and perhaps left at last in the possession of negligent officers and careless men — Besides, the exposed state of our shores demands the security of arms, as I apprehend there will be much ravage and distress. Militia commissions are and have been long wanted in this county, perhaps the press may now be in condition to furnish them, if so, I shall be thankful if your excellency will send me some blanks to be filled up with the names of Officers nominated by the Court. I am Sir your Excellencies most obedient and very humble Servant.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THOMAS McKEAN<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY November 22<sup>d</sup> 1781

DEAR SIR,

My eldest son will have the honor of delivering you this letter. Having business at Philadelphia I have prevailed on him to remit, if he can receive it, the money that has been due from the United States to my brother William Lee for more than two years. It appears to be a partiality not reconcilable to common ideas of justice, that one man shall be fully paid and on demand too, when another for the same service and professedly as well performed, is neglected, and payment delayed. I am really concerned to trouble you or any other friend upon a subject of this kind, because I may expect that your efforts in support of the plainest justice will not prevail against that spirit of faction which in the case of both my brothers has so largely returned evil for good. I do not suppose that M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee regrets having served his country and the cause of liberty at the expense of losing situations honorable and profitable, but he must feel not well when he reflects upon the cruel returns that he has met with. He quickly obeyed the call of Congress to go into their service, and thus he left large debts in London which for the present are not recoverable, and in Virginia a very considerable estate ravaged by the armies of friends & foes, so that little or no remittance can be made for the support of himself & family shaken off by Congress in a foreign land, and not finding it eligible to commit themselves to the sea during war. The vote of Congress for paying him will I fear be ren-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, McKean Collection, VI. No. 69. Addressed, "His Excellency / Thomas M'Kean esquire / at Philadelphia // Favored by M<sup>r</sup> Tho<sup>s</sup> Lee." McKean was President of Congress.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

dered useless by the word convenient which is unfortunately interjected, unless your friendship will suggest for my son some mode of proceeding by which his Uncle may obtain speedy justice —

Do you not think my good Sir that our successes at York will go far towards procuring us an independent peace in the spring? The immense expense of G. Britain and unsuccessful too in every quarter, must clip the wings of ambition and compel avarice to be content —

I shall be ever happy to hear from you and particularly so to know that you are in health & spirits.

I am dear Sir with great esteem & regard your most obedient & very humble Servant.

TO COLONEL [WILLIAM] DAVIES <sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY January 29<sup>th</sup> 1782

SIR,

I was honored at the same time with your two favors of October the 1<sup>st</sup> 1781 & of Jan<sup>y</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> 1782 — Nothing can be more obvious from reason and experience than that the surest way to procure speedy and honorable peace is to be well prepared for war. And this certain rule is at no time so strong as after great successes, which whilst they imbitter the mind of one of the parties, are too apt to throw apathy and neglect into the bosom of the other. I wish that we may conduct ourselves rightly upon this occasion. The last Assembly appears to have done what they could — if money can be borrowed, the great point of filling and

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection III. 62. Addressed to him as, "Commissioner of the War Office/Richmond." Endorsed, "Jan<sup>y</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> 1782/From Col<sup>o</sup> Richard/H. Lee respecting/that the arms &c /taken from his/militia might be/returned."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

furnishing our Line will depend chiefly upon the wisdom and vigor of the executive, supported by the fitness of the recruiting officers. Talents of a peculiar kind are found to be most successful in recruiting, and do you not think Sir that the European accompaniment of musick and money, with a suit of clothes for each recruit, would wonderfully promote success. Such numbers have been disappointed of their promised clothes, that all confidence is lost, and now nothing but the actual delivery of them will do. The times are productive of wonders, or else it would surprise that any jealous genius should be found to deny you the powers necessary for preservation of the constitution for fear that the constitution should be injured — for the same good reason these sprightly folks may discover the danger of giving powder and muskets to the soldiers lest they should shoot themselves and the members of assembly! I am obliged to you Sir for the attention that you have been pleased to pay to the application for restoring our arms, and the payment of the money demanded for cartridge boxes. The last is not the only instance, where I have been concerned, of the attention of the Auditors — I commend them for their care of the public treasure — Where so much is trusted; great understanding, vigilance, integrity, firmness, and impartiality are necessary — It may be worth the while of these gentlemen to take care, at the same time that they carry the vessel of the state clear from Charybdis, that they do not wreck it upon Scylla — that ill-timed<sup>1</sup> parsimony, or ill judged applications of the public money, may not destroy and discourage the necessary defences which can alone secure both public and treasure — I believe it is true that many low and lawless people have encouraged public expence without propriety, without necessity,

<sup>1</sup> The word “judged” is here erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

and even for wicked purposes — but whilst it is highly proper to put an instant stop to such wrong doing, is it therefore right to deny an officer so highly trusted as the Lieutenant of a county the paltry privilege of charging the public with a few cartridge boxes when necessary, and for the making of cartridges, without which, defence against an invading enemy cannot be made? Where danger comes quickly on, does its business, and suddenly retires — the defence must be circumstanced accordingly ; and if the government will not lodge arms and proper ammunition in the counties, it is absurd and vain to suppose that the country can be protected ; if the commanding Officer of the county, and even councils of war, cannot direct such necessities, at the public expence, as are deficient yet indispensable.

When I came here from Congress in 1779, I found the militia unarmed, and unwilling to make resistance against the depredations of the enemy that surrounded us, and that we were constantly exposed to. I applied with care and constancy to government until we were furnished with arms, powder and lead — it was necessary that the latter should be made into cartridges, and I procured it to be done — Since we have been armed, I have seen the militia repel the enemy with spirit and alacrity, so as to do honor to themselves, and to government. But now alas, we must fall into the old and too common contemptible imbecility — the government have taken away our arms, and the Auditors say, make cartridges or cartridge boxes at your peril, these are lawless doings and the public treasure shall not be applied to such vanities ! We must therefore submit to rapine until some shall be sent here with powers to persuade the people that it is better to oppose an armed enemy, without arms on the part of the defendants, and that they are mistaken when they say that this is leading them to disgrace and ruin. The poor man

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who worked honestly upon the cartridges tells me that his claim was rejected with some marks of harshness — there is sometimes a grace in denying that is more agreeable than even the compliance of others — but in this case perhaps it was necessary to support dignity and correct troublesome applicants — And besides, great republicans are naturally proud — but then it<sup>1</sup> used to be shewn to Kings and the slaves of Kings, not to fellow citizens.<sup>2</sup> In April last, the Militia had exhausted their cartridges in an engagement with the enemy at Stratford Landing — I applied to the then governor for powder, lead, cartridge paper &c, he had none of either, but desired me to purchase — I did purchase powder & lead but no paper was to be bought — I furnished some of my own for which no charge is made, but I thought it reasonable that the man who made the cartridges should be paid — the more especially as his charge was so reasonable, that for many days work he would not have received, had his demand been paid, enough to buy a gill of whisky. But this it seems is unlawful and a squandering of the public treasure, so that if legislative wisdom gives not redress, we must be content with wishing for better times and better things. As for the cartridge boxes, I could have sent an affidavit or two to prove that we were desired by the board of war when at Williamsburg to get them made and that the public would pay for them, but I thought that for so small a matter, and for an article apparently necessary, the certificate of the county Lieutenant might give sufficient authenticity. I observe that the Act of May last respecting your office, directs that militia commissions shall come thro you — I have formerly represented to the two late governors, and I think that the same was done to you

<sup>1</sup> The word “ sh<sup>d</sup> ” is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> The words “ but this is ” following are here erased.

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in some of my former letters, that blank commissions were much wanted in this county. It used to be the custom to lodge such with the county Lieutenant. if the same custom continues, and you have commissions prepared, be pleased to furnish me with some. There is a Lieutenant-Col<sup>o</sup> Major, Captains & subs without commissions, that have for some time been nominated by the Court — Be so kind Sir as forward the inclosed packet by the first Messenger that goes Southward, and excuse me for the liberty I have taken to desire my friends there to send their letters for me to your care, trusting to your goodness that you will forward them quickly and safely as possible — We still rely upon your good offices for having our arms restored to us, and may I add, that the necessary services really performed for the public, shall be paid to the honest men who have done them?

I have the honor to be with great esteem and regard  
Sir your most obedient humble Servant.

TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

[BENJAMIN HARRISON]

WESTMORELAND July 9<sup>th</sup> 1782

SIR/

I am well informed that a party of the Enemy, amounting in white & black people to an hundred armed men, landed last friday at the plantation of M<sup>r</sup> Motram Ball on Potomac River in the adjoining County & having marched to the late Col. Presley Thorntons house about three or four miles into the Country robbed M<sup>r</sup> Ball (who now lives in that house, his own being lately burned) and the Stewart of Col.

<sup>1</sup> L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, III. 63.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Thorntons estate of all their moveables with eight Negroes, declaring they shoud soon return to the same business as they well knew the Militia to be without arms — They set fire to Col. Thorntons house but extinguished it again on being informd that it belonged to a person in England — I have thought it my duty to give your Excellency this intelligence, to the end that such measures as the wisdom of the executive may adopt, & the power of Government be equal to, may be applied for preventing the public & private injuries that shall, & otherwise certainly will flow from these piratical incursions; and that neither myself nor my brother Officers may be exposed to censure for not preventing what it is certainly not in our power to prevent.

The Militia of these lower & exposed Counties are in effect disarmed, by their best arms being taken from them whilst in Gloucester by order of Government, & those that remain being of indifferent quality: & much dispersed by the dispersion of the people in whose hands they are placed — Some ammunition we have but not enough for an hours engagement & we are without flints.

In the course of this month I suppose there will be of public property arising from the late revenue Law, & from payments heretofore made under former Laws, not less than three hundred Hogsheads of Tobacco in the several Warehouses of this County, which by such a force as robbed M<sup>r</sup> Balls, may in one day be destroyed under our present disarmd, defenceless state — In the very same exposed situation will be the public revenue Tobacco of those water coast Counties above & below us — To this we may add the specifics collected & collecting under the act of last fall.

It is not to be presumed that the enemy are unacquainted with the collection & exposure of revenue



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

property, & since they know already that the Militia are disarmed, it is of all things most probable that they will aim at disarming Government by destroying its revenue; and to injure Government in the sentiments of the people who while they feel the pressure of heavy taxes, find not the benefit of protection, & see the property which they have with difficulty spared destroyed without producing benefit to the Community.

Col. Davies informed me he had ordered M<sup>r</sup> Dick of Fredericksburg to furnish this County with an hundred stand of arms—this number tho much short of our wants, would help us considerably, but they are not arrived & our use for them may be the next hour—fixed ammunition woud for us be better than that which is not made up, as we have no Cartridge paper or person now here acquainted with the business of making Cartridges.

After all, supposing the Militia well armd, your Excellency's perfect knowledge of this matter will instantly satisfy you how very inadequate to this kind of defence is the best armd Militia—their dispersion admits not the guarding against the sudden incursions of a quick moving enemy—It is by a water defence alone that aggression from the water is to be guarded against along an extensive & open coast—These pirates are daily growing more formidable by their new adopted plan of arming black men, & if effectual care be not taken to prevent them, whilst in a state of infancy, it requires no great penetration to discover that this beginning may end in very extensive consequences—It woud surely be of most important benefit if the Cormorant with that Barge lately taken at Richmond from the Eastern Shore could be immediately sent up the Bay to scour the Tangier Eastern shore, & some distance in the mouths of the wide Rivers.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

By this time I suppose the french troops are gone & of consequence the frigates they had in our Bay, which latter circumstance renders it of infinite consequence that those hordes of pirates shoud be broken up, dispersed & destroyed before a water protection may come superior to ours to cover their ruinous depredations.

Your Goodness will pardon me Sir for saying so much on a subject to which your own judgement is far more compitent, & I hope you will ascribe it to my anxiety for the interest & honor of our Country & its government——

I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect, esteem & regard

Sir Your Excellencies most Obedient  
& humble Servant —

P.S.<sup>1</sup>

Indisposition obliged me to employ an Amanuensis thus far, and just now authentic intelligence has come that these pirates in attempting to take a flower loaded brig in St. Marys for Boston ; were repulsed with the loss of ten men killed, several wounded, and some prisoners, the latter of whom declare that these pirates have contracted in N. York for the delivery of 500 Negro men in the course of this summer, and that they mean to effect their purpose by arming Negroes as they get such as are fit for their warfare<sup>2</sup>—their whole crew was Americans and Negroes except two Scotch irish, & one frenchman—they were commanded by *Whaling* & *Penny*, two most notorious Pirates. Upon St. Georges Island they left some wounded Men who inform that these fellows parted with them determined to bring up a greater force to continue their operations.

<sup>1</sup> This entire postscript is in Lee's handwriting.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for "purpose" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

This Messenger is a hired Express who receives his Masters pay & whom I hope y<sup>r</sup> Excellency will order to be paid. He can bring us a few flints.

TO [GENERAL WILLIAM WHIPPLE?]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY VIRGINIA July 17<sup>th</sup> 1782

MY DEAR FRIEND

Judging of your heart by my own I cannot suppose that either of us will conceive ourselves neglected by an interrupted correspondence in the present state of things. It must certainly be some other cause than neglect which can produce such an effect between two persons whose friendship is founded on virtue tried in severest times—For my part I must cease to live before I cease to love those proved Patriots with whom I early toiled in the vineyard of American liberty. The same reasons that I find had prevented you, have also discouraged me from writing, and nothing more so than the uncertainty of conveyance. It is disagreeable to write to a friend when the mind is cramped, and a free communication of sentiments prevented. Capt Simpson safely contrived to me your letter with the very agreeable present of Fish, for both which I return you many thanks. The fish were fine and furnished me with frequent opportunities whilst I regaled my friends here, to reco[g]nize the worth of the bounteous hand by which we were so delightfully fed. But I was never made so happy as to see either Capt. Simpson or your relation. They came not on my way or I in theirs. I sent one of my sons to entreat the pleasure of their company, but he was not fortunate enough to meet with them. I

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Langdon Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

was in great hopes that the Major would have honored me with his Company here whilst Capt Simpson's business detained him in the Country. We have indeed as you have observed suffered our share of the calamities of War, and I hope it may furnish us with that best kind of improvement which is furnished in the school of adversity—You may see by the last published Resolves at New York that the<sup>1</sup> of our Assembly published that the last arrived delusion at New York is not likely to make a greater impression than the old ones had done. I fear Poor Weeks has gone to the bottom of the Sea with a very valuable Cargo and every Soul but one who was supported three Days on a ladder before he was picked up. An attempt is said to have been made to Assassinate Dr. Franklin who is only Slightly wounded on the ribs.

TO THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA<sup>2</sup>

[BENJAMIN HARRISON]

CHANTILLY, Septem. 6th 1782

SIR

I have now the honor to transmit to your Excellency an account of the manner in which the act of last session for recruiting the Army has been executed in this county. The militia having been laid off into classes according to Law, our number amounted to 38 and you will see by the list inclosed how each class hath as yet acquitted itself. Not a man has been found, but £ 259.5.3½ specie has been paid to me, and I have reason to expect the ballance daily. When the collectors have made returns of defaultees, warrants

<sup>1</sup> The transcript shows no indication of an omission here.

<sup>2</sup> From the text printed in *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, III.  
291.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

have issued in the nature of executions against such defaulters. Nothing as yet can be done with the collectors failing to make return, until a meeting of the Court shall present an opportunity of making motions against them. I am now to request that your Excellency will direct an officer to come and receive this money, for it remains here at very great risk from the pirates that infest this river and the bay. A stout Barge of the enemy was off the mouth of Coan (about 15 miles below this) a few days ago; and they contrive to get such accurate information of the state of things on land, that I have not the least doubt but that they know long ere now, that the houses of the County Lieutenants are the depositories of the Soldiers Tax and will consequently exert themselves to get possession of the money. This indeed suggests the propriety of quickly removing this collection from all the counties contiguous to the Water, for tho' there is no danger from attempts in the open day, where pains have been taken to arm & Encourage the militia, yet nothing is easier to these pirates, as every days experience proves, than to land in the night and to plunder houses two or three miles from the Shore and return with safety to their vessels before day, or any force can be collected to punish them. It is greatly unfortunate for this country that no exertions are made to defend its honor and interest upon the water within the very bowels of the State. It is not only the more general and open commerce that is destroyed, but even the small interior trade is ruined, so that no possible channel is left open for the industry of the people to collect money for their produce, and therefore no possible means left for the future payment of taxes. The soldiers tax with the land tax, will glean up the Specie so effectually from this county, that I verily believe not five pounds will remain within it, nor any

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

method of getting more than now presents. It may not be amiss to apprise the officer coming for this money, that almost the whole is in Silver, very weighty and bulky and rendering it necessary that he should come provided with suitable means for carrying it off.

I have the honor to be your Excellencies most obedient humble Servant—

TO [DR. WILLIAM SHIPPEN, JR. ?]<sup>1</sup>

• [January 7, 1783]

REPORT—That there is a British Party on the continent at the head of which are Mr. S. Adams, Messrs. Lees and Mr. Laurens.

Resolved Unanimously that no part of the communications before the Committee of privileges & elections does in any manner touch the public or private conduct of M. R. H. Lee or induce the most distant suspicion of his want of attachment to the interests of this country; but that on the contrary this Committee do bear testimony to the World that the uniform rectitude of his public conduct entitles him to the fullest confidence and warmest approbation of his country.

N. B. this passed in a Committee of the Whole House and was confirmed by the House.

CHANTILLY, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1783

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It may seem strange to you that my letter should be prefaced as this is—but as you may possibly have heard something of the operations of faction here lately, it is enough that “the antidote should go along with the poison,” as the most learned, most wise, most

<sup>1</sup> Copy for the text kindly presented by Dr. J. Franklin Jameson and Mr. Waldo G. Leland.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

virtuous, and most admirable Judge Mercer says — The rest of this delectable and Honorable business will be communicated to you by our brother A who has had the Honor, for certainly it is an Honor to have been a principal object of this faction. I was going to congratulate you on your being removed from the ways of faction, but I believe factions are found in physicks as well as politics. However I know that you have wisdom to despise these, and to proceed onward to the attainment of those rewards which are due to the eminent and the diligent in your profession. It would considerably add to my happiness if our situations admitted of sometimes seeing each other, when the delights of friendly social converse might compensate for the wicked things and wicked men that we see abroad.

How comes on your granddaughter Livingston—I have a little Frank Lightfoot full as mettlesome as she can be, & who will not refuse a challenge from any fair one, whether begotten, or born, upon the North river—So that the little damsel must be very modest and very reserved when Frank is present.

I was going to write a word or two about politics but—Mum for that—Some penetrating eye may see it, or curious ear may hear of what I have written; and with lengthened face, shrug'd shoulders, and important air, whisper “an enemy to the French Alliance.” It must be very hard tho, if they will not let us say, that a War for nothing ought to have at least one years duration less than that which was waged for the *fairest woman* in the World. Do not let my Sister see this part, nor show it to any zealous politician, least it bring on my devoted head a storm both of religion and politics.

Remember me with much affection to the old Doctor, to my Sister & Cousins—farewell.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO GEO[RGE] WYTHE<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY feby 28<sup>th</sup> 1783

MUCH RESPECTED WORTHY SIR,

My son Ludwell comes again to put himself under your patronage in his Law studies, from whence we both regretted that he was compelled to remove by the necessities of the times. Independent indeed of the powerful consideration of your friendship for himself and me, I feel strongly the propriety of preferring *giving preference of encouragement to*<sup>2</sup> the Institutions of my own country to those of other states, and I am happy to be informed that sensible men in the neighboring Countries,<sup>3</sup> entertain a proper sense of the benefits to be derived from your benevolent<sup>4</sup> attention to the instruction of youth; as I understand that young gentlemen now of Philadelphia<sup>5</sup> propose to *finish* their studies with you. My son will in all things follow your<sup>6</sup> friendly advice and be grateful to the bestower for giving it.

As far as we may judge at present, it would seem that we are not far removed from the possession of that blessing which you have so uniformly [and] so ably contended for — the Independence of the United States appears by the King of England's speech to his Parliament, to be granted by him, and many other corresponding accounts render it more than probable that a general peace has already taken place, upon which

<sup>1</sup> A. dr. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 390. A text, with variations, is printed in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, May, 1860, p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> "Preferring" is written above the words in italics.

<sup>3</sup> Substituted for "States" erased.

<sup>4</sup> Substituted for "humane labors" erased.

<sup>5</sup> The five preceding words are substituted for "youth in" erased.

<sup>6</sup> The word "directions" is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

favorable prospect I do most heartily congratulate you.

M<sup>rs</sup> Lee presents her compliments to your Lady, and I beg to be continued on the roll of your best friends. I am with the most perfect esteem & regard, dear Sir, your much obliged & obedient.

HONORABLE  
GEO. WYTHE, Esq<sup>r</sup>

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA 6<sup>th</sup> April 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND.

May I now congratulate you on the fair prospect of obtaining that which we long together labor'd for the accomplishment of? I wish most sincerely that the full possession of wisdom and virtue may make our common country the United States Independent indeed, not of one only, but of all the nations upon earth. As I cannot but despair of ever seeing you here, I shall be compelled to visit Boston before I end my days, that once more I may have the pleasure of passing some hours with you. If you are in correspondence with Gen. Whipple, be so kind as to remember me to him with great affection.

The principle design of this letter is to request your good offices with the house of Tracy in Newbury to receive under their patronage and mercantile tuition Master George Lee a son of my dear deceased brother Thomas Lee. This youth is in his fifteenth year, very diligent in his studies, and of fine disposition, his mother would breed him to commerce, and the house

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. Addressed, "Honorable Samuel Adams/in/Boston."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of Tracy is recommended to her as the best in America.

We shall be very thankful for knowing from you whether Mess<sup>rs</sup> Traceys will receive Master Lee into their Counting House, and upon what terms. Your letter being sent to my brother D<sup>r</sup> Lee at Philadelphia will be quickly & safely conveyed to me. Retired absolutely to private life I am now busied in the important concern of taking care of a large family. Taking care of, and providing for nine children is really a very important concern. But in every situation of life I shall certainly be my dear Sir your faithful friend and affectionate Servant.

TO [R. WORMLEY CARTER]<sup>1</sup>

RICHMOND June 3<sup>d</sup> 1783

DEAR SIR,

If any thing had passed here of sufficient importance to engage your attention from your private affairs I should have communicated it; but as usual, much is talked of & but little done. You know that our ports have been opened to the British Trade, and an Act has passed to suspend the Sherifs power of distraining for the years revenue until the 20<sup>th</sup> of next November. A Tobacco law upon the old plan, previous to the revolution, is now engrossing — Very animated but very injudicious attacks have been made on our lower warehouses, which for this time we have parried. We have some imaginations not less heated than the last Assembly produced, as you will agree when you know that all those people whom the Statute Staple drove

<sup>1</sup>A. L. S. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Papers, IV. 121. A copy of this letter is among the "Copies of Letters to Landon Carter" in the Virginia Historical Society.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

from this country, are forbidden, by a bill now in Committee of the whole house, to return here under penalty of being hanged; and so are all residents of this country however long since, who since the War have either resided within the territories of Great Britain, or who residing here formerly have born arms against us in the late war! You may be sure that this mad, murder working bill, will be properly pruned before it passes into law, if any part of it should so pass.

The measure that I most apprehend mischief from, is the renewed attack of R<sup>d</sup> Morris for the 5 p<sup>r</sup> Cent impost, on imported goods of all kinds—With all the dangerous train of concealed circumstances, this system presents ease in paying taxes, and plausibility in other respects, that will be very apt to delude and take in those minds that trouble not themselves to investigate consequences, or trace effects in their causes. Besides the danger to liberty that it threatens, I much fear that it will strangle our infant commerce in its birth, make us pay more than our proportion, and sacrifice this country to its northern brethren. There is talk of altering the Revenue law, but the particulars have not transpired—A Militia bill is ordered in, and one has already appeared for establishing Circuit courts, and also for funding all our debts—But whether these conceptions will ever issue into birth I cannot tell—Many of them will probably sleep with their Ancestors, the former projects in this way—If I could envy my friend anything it would be his happiness in being at home—For added to the other causes of complaint for being here, the noxious water & air of this filthy place, have deprived me of health for several days past—My respects to the Lady, & my best wishes for the family of Sabine Hall

farewell.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GENERAL WILLIAM WHIPPLE] <sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIR. POT. RIVER 1<sup>st</sup> July [1783.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was unfortunate enough to be from home, attending our General Assembly, when Capt Palmer did me the honor to visit this place with your favor of April the 17<sup>th</sup>, and the fish you were so kind as to send me. The Captains obliging manner of executing this business gives me a high idea of his polite attention, and was very pleasing to his family — I hope that Capt Palmer will favor me again with his Company when he comes to this River, for I shall now be certainly more at home than the late tempestuous season permitted. It is very true that I much like your Fish, but it is also true that I receive it with infinitely more pleasure when it comes as a token of friendship from a Gentleman who I shall never cease to respect and esteem, whilst I live. For I am very sure that if my labors in the vineyard of Liberty have contributed to the glorious success of our Common Country, that yours have done none less so — And if the Friendships of the world being too often confederacies in vice or leagues of pleasure, are but short lived; the duration of ours will be as certainly lasting as it is certainly founded on the certain principals of virtuous love for our Country. There is no Circumstance in life that would make me happier than to see you at Portsmouth and our old Friends in Boston. I hope to do so, if the necessary attention to a numerous family (for I have nine children) Does not prevent me.

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Langdon Collection. Though the letter is not signed or addressed, it is evidently a reply to the letter from Whipple printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 238.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

But will you suffer me to hope also that we shall see you here, for there is not a limb of my family but what will rejoice at it. What think you of the late address of Congress to the States on the subject of 5 per cent impost? <sup>1</sup> To me it seems, and I am sorry to be compelled to think so, too early and too strong an attempt to over leap those fences,<sup>2</sup> established by the Confederation to secure the liberties of the respective States. Where the possession of power creates as it too frequently does, a thirst for more, plausible arguments are seldom wanting to persuade acquiescence. Thus the excellent plan of the Confederation which leaves the apportioned sum "to be laid and levied by the authority of the Legislature of the several States &c" is to be gradually sapped and the all important power of the purse, vested (under arguments, some only of which are plausible) in an Aristocratic Assembly. For, give the purse, & the sword will follow, and with these the wheel of rotation so much relied on, will presently be trashed, to use the phrase of Mr. Harrington, and that liberty which we love and now deserve, will become an empty Name. Let us be cautious how we introduce such radical defects into our system, as may furnish the most distant pretext for foreign troops to interpose in favor of *Government* against the *people*, as hath lately happened in Geneva! So long as the question shall be for increasing the power of Congress, I would answer with the change of a word only, as the discerning men of old did, when the Imperial Law was proposed to be introduced upon the ruins of the Common Law. "Nolumus leges Confederationis mutare."

<sup>1</sup> Whipple's answer, September 15, 1783, favoring the impost, is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 113.

<sup>2</sup> The portion of the letter from this point to the end is from a copy of an extract in Harvard University Library, Sparks Mss., LII. ii.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

The General Assembly of this State adjourned the other day, without adopting the plan of Congress proposed in the address. But in their Law for appropriating the Public revenue, they have appropriated from the Land & Slave Taxes 400,000 Dollars annually for the Treasury of the United States, which is the sum demanded of us by the address.

TO [ARTHUR LEE]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY July 6. 1783

MY DEAR BROTHER,

When the first Continental ships of war were fitted out at Philadelphia under the command of Commodore Hopkins in the last of 1775 & the first of 1776, the first object was, to surprise and take Lord Dunmore with his Associates then at Norfolk — To affect this purpose, the then Marine Committee desired me to write to Col<sup>o</sup> Harrison, then a Member of Congress sent to Baltimore for the purpose of executing some business relative to this naval expedition, to desire that he would procure and send to Philadelphia from Virginia two pilots well acquainted with the navigation of the Chesapeake, and men who could be relied upon for their attachment to our cause — Col<sup>o</sup> Harrison<sup>2</sup> (the now Governor) made application to Virginia accordingly, in consequence of which two of our best Bay pilots came up to Phil<sup>a</sup> soon after christmas 1775 — Edward Cooper and W<sup>m</sup> Ballard were the men — After waiting some time in Phil<sup>a</sup> for our fleet to get in readiness, the arrival of the Liverpoole & the Roebuck into Chesapeak put an end to that expedition, and the Pilots were discharged, as they now say, without any

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Harrison.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

pay — And they do at this time demand pay from the present Governor — We wish you to have enquiry made concerning this matter, and to get the men paid if they have not already been so — M<sup>r</sup> Matlack was at that time Clerk of the Marine Committee, and can inform where the books of that committee are, which will show the circumstance of these men being sent for & whether they were paid upon being discharged — It is not improbable that M<sup>r</sup> Timothy Matlack gave all these papers to his Successor Clerk of the Marine Committee — He was a M<sup>r</sup> Brown in my time, and being a man of business, he can readily search into this matter & see what was done — The pilots waited some time in Phil<sup>a</sup> & as they say suffered in other respects by this journey — At all events, if they have not been paid, they ought to [be] reasonably compensated. I am not yet recovered from my Richmond indisposition but I am better, and hope that a proper attention to medicine and regimen will restore me quick.

I am your Affectionate brother and friend.

TO [JAMES MONROE]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY January 5<sup>th</sup> 1784

DEAR SIR,

I have duly received the letter that you were pleased to favor me with on the 16<sup>th</sup> of december last, and I am very sensible of your kind sentiments respecting my health. I am indeed restored beyond my expectations, but yet very far from being so circumstanced as to promise hopes of being soon in a state to venture

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Monroe Correspondence, VIII. 819. A text with variations and omissions is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 222. Monroe's letter to which this is an answer is printed under the erroneous date "1683," *ibid.*, II. 221.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

again on the stormy sea of politics & public business. Few, I believe, feel more sensibly than myself, how much our unhappy country suffers, and is likely to suffer from the want of those qualities, and such conduct as is certainly indispensable to the success and wellbeing of Society. It would seem that such feelings are natural to a man who has the misfortune to see his country likely to loose those blessings of liberty that he has so long and so strenuously labored to secure for it. You do me much honor in asking my poor opinion concerning the great Congressional questions that are stated. They are of much consequence no doubt, and I heartily wish that they may finally receive proper determinations. You are perfectly right Sir in your observation concerning the consequence of a standing army—that it has constantly terminated in the destruction of liberty—It has not only *been* constantly so, but I think it clear from the construction of human nature, that it will always *be* so—And it is really unfortunate for human freedom, safety, and happiness, that so many plausible arguments are ever at hand to support a system which both reason & experience prove to be productive of the greatest human evils, Slavery—But it may well be questioned, why, to avoid possible ills, should we adopt measures which in their nature produce the highest evil? The spirit of the 4<sup>th</sup> section of the 6<sup>th</sup> article of the Confederation plainly discourages the idea of standing army, by the special injunctions concerning a well regulated militia, which is indeed the best defence, and only proper security for a free people to venture upon. To guard our frontiers from Indian invasion, to prevent irregular settlements, and to secure the possessions of foreign powers from the encroachments of our people which may provoke foreign or indian wars; seem to be the reasons assigned for the adoption of this mischief work-



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ing system, a standing military force. But surely it is the business of other powers to secure their own possessions and punish the violators of them — And it would be as new as it would be improper to keep a standing army to prevent the encroachments of our own citizens upon foreign states — it will ever be sufficient to disavow such proceedings and to give the Culprits up to justice, or punish them ourselves. As to the protection of our own frontiers, it would seem best to leave it to the people themselves, as hath ever been the case, and if at any time the frontier men should be too hard pressed, they may be assisted by the midland militia. This will always secure to us a hardy set of men on the frontiers, used to arms, and ready to assist against invasions on other parts. Whereas, if they are protected by regulars, security will necessarily produce inattention to arms, and the whole of our people becoming disused to War, render the Curse of a standing army Necessary. In this light the Indians may be considered as a useful people, as it is surely fortunate for a free community to be under some necessity of keeping the whole body acquainted with the use of Arms.

Should the fear of Indians in some measure check the settlement of that country, in [it] can be no inconvenience to a people already inhabiting much too thinly the land they possess. Irregular Settlers, I think may be kept away by timely and judicious proclamations of Congress forbidding such settlements and declaring that no Titles shall ever be given to such settlers. and perhaps also, by having a few persons near the Scene authorised to give notice of this to all Goers there upon their first appearance. If at last the horrid evil of a standing army must be encounterd, it is clear to me that such forces had better be placed in fortifications judiciously chosen to give protection to

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our own commerce & that of foreigners. But I must confess that I would infinitely rather see this last valuable purpose effected by the more safe, and more effectual measure of a Navy, which I sincerely hope will be the constant unremitting object of Congressional attention. And both the building and manning of this Navy, should be, as much as possible, diffused throughout the 13 States. With respect to Trade its combinations are so many and so various, that it is not easy to say much with propriety on that subject hastily — One sentiment respecting it admits not of much doubt — it is, that the free nature & genius of commerce abhors and shuns restraint, and that in young commercial States, to embarrass Trade with heavy imposts or other clogs, is effectually to demolish it. How grievously do I lament that this is fully & fatally the case in our unfortunate country. In our actual circumstances it is difficult to meet and check effectually the illiberal commercial conduct of European States, which seems to be by counter and similar restraints — but the want of men and vessels for the purpose of our own transportation renders this difficult if not impossible at present. A wise attention to the raising of Seamen and building of Ships may in time cause those States to repent their selfish policy. It appears to me that Congress would do well to recommend strongly to the different Legislatures the adoption of every legal means and encouragement for raising Seamen — It is a most important object, and much, too much neglected. Do you not think that it would be well for Congress to regulate and bring to uniformity the business of weights and measures throughout the U. States, and also to establish a uniformity in the value of Coins of all sorts? Our country in particular is suffering great loss for want of the latter regulation. My respects, if you please, to your Col-

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league M<sup>r</sup>. Hardy and tell him that I shall be very happy to receive a line from him now & then when his leisure permits—I will thank you much for procuring for me the Constitutions of the respective States as they are collected & published in one pocket Volume.

I am dear Sir, with much esteem and regard, your most obedient & very humble Servant.

P.S. If the Danes & Dutch have not gone upon the plans of England & France to prohibit our bringing W. India produce home in our own bottoms—Will it not be well to try if these more liberal States can be prevailed with to establish Free ports in their Islands, thro which the trade both with the British & French Isles may be carried on to the entire defeating of their Selfish policy?

TO GEORGE TURBERVILLE, SEN.<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY May 14, 1785 [1784]

DEAR SIR,

When last you wrote to me, you supposed that if your Counter petition got to Richmond by the first of June it would be soon enough—

My advice is, that you send it as soon as you can, because, it is not improbable but that the Assembly may go upon such business early, in which case you might be too late with your opposing petition. We will call at Pecatone, if possible, in our way to Northumberland the last of next week. We all here send love to Pecatone & I am dear Sir your affectionate relation.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection. Of "Pecatone," Virginia.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

DEAR SIR,

CHANTILLY July the 22<sup>d</sup> 1784

The letter that you did me the honor to write to me on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June last, I did not receive until two days ago. I impute this to my having been obliged to leave the Assembly, by the ill state of my health, a fortnight before it was adjourned.

The very great respect that I shall ever pay to your recommendations, would have been very sufficient to have procured my exertions in favor of M<sup>r</sup> Paine, independent of his great public merits in our revolution.

I have a perfect knowledge of the extraordinary effects produced by that Gentlemans writings, effects of such an important nature, as would render it very unworthy of these States to let him suffer anywhere; but it would be culpable indeed to permit it under their own eye, and within their own limits. I had not the good fortune to be present when M<sup>r</sup> Paines business was considered in the House of Delegates, or most certainly I should have exerted myself in his behalf. I have been told that a proposition in his favor miscarried from its being observed that he had shewn enmity to this State by having written a pamphlet injurious to our claim of Western Territory — It has ever appeared to me that this pamphlet was the consequence of M<sup>r</sup> Paines being himself imposed upon, and that it was rather the fault of the place than of the Man.

This however, was but a trifle when compared with the great and essential services that his other writings have done for the United States.

I am, with the most unfeigned esteem and regard,  
dear Sir Your most obedient and very humble Servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVI. 326.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON, 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1784

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I thank you for your care and punctuality in sending my Snuff, which I received in good order this morning.

I also wish that you were acquainted with M<sup>r</sup> Hardy, because from similar possessions, I am sure you would have pleasure in the company of a Man of Talents and virtue. I wish you could have informed me that your mother was recovering her health and spirits again — We have not yet a Congress — perhaps it may be the next week before we get members enough. Strange insensibility this, to public duty! You will greatly oblige me my dear Cousin by attending to M<sup>r</sup> Hilkeimer now & then, to quicken as much as is prudent the sale of my horses — for the longer they remain unsold, the less probably will be the neat proceeds. When they are sold, and M<sup>r</sup> Helkeimer satisfied, I would have the ballance paid to the Coachmaker and his receipt taken expressing that it is for a Chair to be made by him for me. The hundred & 20 dollars that he demands with my old Chair to boot, is a high price, and demands on his part that he delivers to me a very complete Carriage, in every respect fitted for duration as far as consists with a reasonable neatness, and the Chair to have a moveable inside lining (over the Cloth) made of some handsome striped Manchester stuff. The Trunk sufficiently large, lined with Green Bays and secured with a good lock & strong hinges. If you will inculcate this now & then, I shall probably have at least as good a

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. Thomas Lee Shippen was Lee's nephew.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Chair, as the former one has been, by means of your worthy father & my good friend. As far as I can judge, from the conversation here, if Congress moves from this place, Philadelphia stands the fairest chance to be the seat of its future residence.

Give my best love to your father, mother, & Sister — and when you see the old Gentleman, do not forget to let him know how sincerely I esteem him.

God bless you, farewell.

P.S. When the horses are sold, let me know, & for what.

### TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON IN N. JERSEY NOV<sup>r</sup> 18. 1784

MY DEAR SIR,

The same cause that deprived me of the pleasure of hearing from you sooner in answer to my former letter, has in great degree prevented me from sooner acknowledging the receipt of your favor of Sep<sup>r</sup> 23<sup>d</sup> 1783; which I received in the following winter, when laboring under a long continued, severe illness, that had nearly ended my days. I thank God that I am now pretty well recovered. Insomuch, that I have been prevailed on, once more to take a seat in Congress; my brothers three years having ended with this federal year. I am much grieved my dear friend, to observe the wonderful lassitude that prevails in public affairs. It is now eighteen days since Congress ought to have assembled here, and as yet we have but five States — It surprises me that these five are all Southern. None but the worthy D<sup>r</sup> Holten from your State being yet arrived from the eastward; whence, formerly we used

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

to derive most punctuality, alacrity, and judicious dispatch of public business. Yet there are many subjects of great importance, that demand the speedy, temperate, wise, and firm discussion of Congress. We have seen here the late report of a Committee of the Privy Council in G. Britain upon the petition of the W. India planters and merchants, soliciting an open and liberal trade with these United States. In this report, all the illiberal & senseless principles of commerce that are scattered thro Lord Sheffields book, are taken up and recommended — The report was laid upon the Table of the House of Commons — But it seems that the Parliament is prorogued without touching the subject of their Commerce with us. So that it remains on the old ground of proclamation, interdicting our trade with the B. West Indies, but thro the medium of British Vessels. It is not difficult for an attentive and diligent enquirer to discern the old Leaven working in the British councils. The same men still rule in secret, the same measures are wished to be practised upon — Nor does it signify much whether a Pitt or a North comes forward upon the Stage. The Nation too, like a strong, proud, & sullen Man angry from unexpected defeat, and imputing misfortunes to Casualties, would seem not averse to a second trial. I remember when once I detested the moderate character. At this moment I think that moderation, wisdom, firmness, and attention, are the principles proper for our adoption: and highly becoming the dignity of our successful situation. Being always prepared for the worst the best events will not be unpleasing. It is observable that great hopes are entertained beyond the water from the expectation of discord, disunion, & apathy on our part. I sincerely wish that they may be disappointed — We understand that Silas Deane & Arnold are in frequent conversation with the British Ministers — And it is

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said that the <sup>1</sup> former composed part of the book adopted by Lord Sheffield. Indeed the principles of that book are precisely the same with those contained in one of M<sup>r</sup> Deanes intercepted letters in 1781. What kind of conduct are we to expect from G. Britain, when its councils are mixt with gall, and when the acrimony of blasted ambition and avarice is permitted to insinuate itself?

I shall be extremely happy to be aided by your counsels during my residence in Congress — Our letters may, in this direct line of post, be secure — especially as the times are not so inquisitive as formerly. I beg that my best respects may be presented to M<sup>rs</sup> Adams, and remember me, if you please, to Gen. Warren, to M<sup>r</sup> Gerry & M<sup>r</sup> Lovell.

I am dear Sir most sincerely and affectionately your friend.

HONORABLE SAMUEL ADAMS.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>2</sup>

TRENTON, NOV<sup>r</sup> 19. 1784

MY DEAR COUSIN,

This mornings post put into my possession your favor of the 17<sup>th</sup> instant, and I thank you for it with great sincerity. I am very happy to hear that M<sup>r</sup> Reed is in your delegation, and I should have been much more so, if your worthy father had been there likewise. It greatly smooths the rugged paths of politics, to travel them with men of ability, integrity, and candor. We are as remote from having a Congress, as we were 19 days ago — with the southern delegates at Philadelphia and those of your State inclusive, we have

<sup>1</sup> The word "latter" is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

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but Six States and a half represented. But one delegate as yet from the eastward, whence formerly proceeded the most industrious attention to public business — I do not like this lentor, this strange lassitude in those who are appointed to transact public affairs. I am here placed in the house of a M<sup>r</sup> Howe, where I have a good warm bedchamber, and other conveniences to my satisfaction — The Streets of the Village in this rainy season, are most disagreeably wet & muddy — How long we shall remain here, it is not in my power to say — M<sup>r</sup> Woolcot, one of the Commissioners for the Indian treaties has come here with a Treaty concluded very satisfactorily with the Six nations. He says that the other two Commissioners are gone to Pittsburg to treat with the Western Indians, and he apprehends that they will accomplish their business on that quarter with facility — I am a good deal distressed about my horses — if they go to vendue, they will sell for nothing — if they remain unsold, they will eat more than they are worth — At this place I think they would not sell because here are so many for sale — If they were in Virginia, I should have no doubt of being able to sell the two for 40 or 50 pounds — In this state of things I can devise no mode of proceeding but the following, which by your friendly offices may perhaps be accomplished — My namesake M<sup>r</sup> Lee of the Indian Queen, is a good natured, obliging person, and I understand that he has something to say with the Stage that goes to Virginia — But tho' this last should not be the case his interposition with Twining's Stage may obtain what I want; which is, that my horses be received to work their way to Alexandria in Virginia so as not to injure them, but only to travel them reasonable distances at a time and giving them due rest & food — Which will at once save their Cavalry, and accomplish my purpose

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of getting my horses to Virginia. At Alexandria they are to be delivered to M<sup>r</sup> Fendall (with the inclosed letter) who lives about half a mile from the Town and is well known there. If M<sup>r</sup> Lee will undertake the affair for me, I shall certainly succeed, & my horses will not be injured in going back — Which latter may happen by overdriving — not properly resting, & properly feeding — Will you be so kind as try your talents at negotiation with M<sup>r</sup> Lee — Julius Caesar shewd his ambition as much when he preferred being the *first man* in a *small village* to the *second* in *Rome*; as when he grasped the Imperial purple. — So evidence may be given in small negotiations of superior fitness for great affairs — I will inclose you a letter for M<sup>r</sup> Fendall to go with the Horses, upon a presumption that your address will be surely successful — I am glad to know that M<sup>r</sup> Quasier promises well, and I expect he will remember that the promises of a Man of honor are sacred —

Present my best love to your Father, Mother, & Sister — and when you see the Old Gentleman do not forget me with him —

I am my dear Cousin your affectionate Uncle and sincere friend.

Will M<sup>r</sup> Hilzheimer be so kind as to have attention paid to my horses backs while they stay — They sh<sup>d</sup> be put to Oats & dry hay 2 or 3 days before they Travel —

TO GENERAL [GEORGE] WASHINGTON<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON, New Jersey, November 20th, 1784.

DEAR SIR — I should sooner have done myself the honour of writing to you, if it had been in my power to have communicated any thing agreeable; but I could

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 48.



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only have informed you, that we had not, and that we cannot say when we shall have, members enough to make a Congress; as yet, we have but four states convened. This lassitude, in our public councils, must afflict our friends, and encourage the hopes of our trans-Atlantic foes, who look at us with an evil eye. Mr. Wolcott arrived here yesterday, with the treaty, made at fort Stanwix, with the Six Nations; and he informs us, that the other two commissioners have proceeded to Pittsburg, to treat with the western tribes. He thinks, (from the satisfaction that appeared among some Shawanee chiefs, who were at Fort Stanwix,) that the commissioners will not find much difficulty in their treaty with the western nations. I have the honour to enclose you a copy of the northern treaty, and shall be happy to know your opinion of it. I understand, from Mr. Wolcott, that the commissioners of the United States met many difficulties, thrown in their way by New York, which they overcame, at last, by much firmness and perseverance. It is unfortunate when private views obstruct public measures, and more especially when a state becomes opposed to the States; because, it seems to confirm the predictions of those who wish us not well, and who cherish hopes from a discord arising from different interests. Colonel Monroe, of our delegation, who is lately returned from a tour to Montreal, Niagara, and Lake Erie, informs us, that he learnt, in his journey, that the western posts were to be detained from us; and, that the reason assigned, was, because of the conduct of New York and Virginia; the former for pushing the law of confiscation beyond the terms of peace, and Virginia for not repealing the laws impeding the recovery of British debts. The governor of New York, told Colonel Monroe, that it was a mistaken charge upon them, for that they had not confiscated since the provisional arti-

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cles; it is to be lamented, that any pretext should be furnished for injuring us in the essential manner that the detension of these posts will do. The Parliament, it seems, is prorogued, without touching the subject of their trade with us, although a committee of the privy council, upon the petition of the West India merchants and planters, had reported an approbation of all the silly, malignant principles of Lord Sheffield, respecting our trade with the British West Indies. This book of Lord Sheffield, has been very ably answered, by several writers, in Great Britain. My respects, if you please, to your lady; I hope that she has recovered her health.

I have the honour to be, &c.

General WASHINGTON, Mount Vernon.

TO [JAMES MADISON]<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON November 20. 1784

SIR

I wish it were in my powers to give you the satisfaction that I know it would afford you to be informed that Congress was assembled and proceeding well with the public business. Unfortunately, we have not yet a Congress, & altho twenty days are elapsed since the time appointed for its meeting, but 4 States have been convened. No doubt Col<sup>o</sup> Monroe has informed his Correspondents of the intelligence he received on his Tour to Montreal, Niagara &c that one reason assign'd for detaining the western posts from the United States was, because Virginia had not repealed her laws that impede the recovery of British debts. It is sincerely to be lamented that our State should be so

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Madison Papers, XIII. 139. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 50.

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charged, and it is much to be wished that the advocates for retaining those laws w<sup>d</sup> no longer insist upon furnishing pretext for detaining from the U. S. possessions of such capital importance to the Union as these posts are. I have the honor to inclose you a copy of the treaty lately made at Fort Stanwix with the six nations. It was brought here by M<sup>r</sup> Wolcott, who informs us that the other two Commissioners were gone to Pittsburg to hold a treaty there with the western nations—he apprehends (from the content that appeared at fort Stanwix among some Shawanese chiefs) that the commissioners will not find much difficulty in treating with the western Indians.<sup>1</sup> The accounts that we daily receive of the powerful emigrations from our State to Georgia, to North & South Carolina, & from the interior parts to Kentucki, are very alarming—The causes assigned are two—the desire of removing from heavy taxes, and the search after land. It certainly becomes our Legislature to consider this point with great attention, and to remove, or lessen the causes that effect the depopulation of the country. Do you not think Sir, that the Taxes might be considerably lessened by funding all our debts, both foreign and domestic—And then, by imposing such Taxes only as will most punctually pay the interest & sink the principal by very slow degrees<sup>2</sup> and for support of the civil list? This would satisfy the public creditors, because the certainty of receiving the interest will render the principal vendible on good terms—It seems to me, that by this mode, the tax might be considerably lowerd from its present enormous height. I think that I may venture safely to say, that our Revenue, Certificate, and all other taxes, amount in the aggregate to a heavier taxation than prevails in any

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “nations” erased.

<sup>2</sup> The word “only” is here erased.

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part of the world! Upon this circumstance, I find some British writers founding the hope of our depopulation. It surprised me a good deal that our last Assembly did not take up and adopt, for the ease of our fellow Citizens, the Facilities given by Congress in their Act of the 28<sup>th</sup> of April last. By this Act (which I understand is before the Assembly) one fourth of the federal demand against us, may be discharged with Certificates of interest for money loaned the U. S. or for interest on liquidated debts of the U. S. If these certificates were by law made receivable in the Revenue tax, it would certainly & considerably facilitate the payment of that Tax.

It seems that the parliament of G. Britain was prorogued without any thing being done respecting our Trade with them, altho a Committee of the privy Council, upon the petition of the W. India planters & merchants for a free trade between them & the U. S. had reported an approbation of all the silly, malign commercial restraints upon our trade with their W. India islands, that are to be found in Lord Sheffields book on the Commerce of the two countries.

I have the honor to be, with much esteem and regard, Sir your most humble Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON NOV<sup>r</sup> 22<sup>d</sup> 1784

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I wrote to you very fully by yesterdays post in answer to your favor of the 17<sup>th</sup>, and I beg your attention to that letter. By the return of Col<sup>o</sup> Mercer you may, perhaps, be enabled to give me some account of your negotiation with M<sup>r</sup> Lee, and whether my

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

horses can probably go to Virginia safely in the Stage. Will you be so kind as to get your Taylor (now become mine also) to procure for me a pattern of the very best black silk Net breeches—with Silk garters, proper buttons, sewing silk, and every material, lining excepted, (which I can get here,) necessary for making up the breeches. The Taylor from having seen me may well guess at the size<sup>d</sup> pattern that will fit me—Thighs long but not large—I wish the silk to be fine, stout, & strong—for I have seen some of these patterns that I would not give one Copper for. I will send the Taylor his money immediately on receiving his bill of cost, and thank him to boot for making a good choice of a Pattern. M<sup>r</sup> Barthol should make the breeches for me in preference to any other Man, if I were not apprehensive that having never measured me, he could not fit me, and I am very particular about my breeches—So that I must content myself with getting them made by an inferior hand here, as I am in present want. Col<sup>l</sup> Mercer will be so obliging as to bring up the parcel for me.

My best love is presented to your father, mother, & Sister—Remember me to the old Gentleman, and to M<sup>r</sup> Blake.

I am my dear Cousin Your most affectionate Uncle & friend.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON November 24<sup>th</sup> 1784

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

Your very obliging attention to my affairs deserves, as it certainly receives, my best thanks. The horses, I find are in a good way of getting back to Virginia,

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



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and I best like the Mode of their returning with the good [Gen]<sup>1</sup>tleman you mention, as promising less mischief to the [Ho]<sup>1</sup>rses — But, should they not be put to dry food a day or [two]<sup>1</sup> at M<sup>r</sup> Heilkeimers? — Now for the Breeches — Oh the Breeches — I must have a pair of black breeches — they suit my years, my station; and above all, they please my inclination. Plague on the fashion, it will be trenching on the plans of gravity, and disturbing its operations — But tho this same fashion will not suffer me to wear black Net Silk, perhaps it may permit black of some other kind — Consult my friend M<sup>r</sup> De Bartholt upon this point — and since important points should not hastily be determined — that this may have the weight that wise deliberation may give it, I wish that my good brother your father and yourself may supervise M<sup>r</sup> De Bartholt in this business. The question for consideration is shortly this — Will the fashion permit an old grave Member of Congress to wear black breeches; it being remembered always that he means to accompany the black breeches with black Silk Stockings & white Shoe & Knee buckles — If this should be answered in the affirmative (which I very much hope) the next question is, what sort of black — for black Silk Net it cannot, must not be — Remember again, that except black cloth, black plush, or too thin black Silk — Any black Material that is Neat, genteel and warm, and durable will suit me — Must I add, fashionable — Let this last be as shall be t[hou]<sup>1</sup>ght proper in Council — Now my dear Cousin, [when]<sup>1</sup> this weighty matter is determined — I will then thank M<sup>r</sup> De Bartholt for sending me the Material resolved upon, with the apendages for making up as mentioned in my last, by the first safe opportunity — They may be put up in a small, close, & convenient package, so as not to be of incon-

<sup>1</sup> Ms. torn.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

venient Carriage — Joking apart, I really want the Breeches very much — And will be obliged by your friendly attention to the subject —

My love always attends the family —  
God bless you, farewell.

P.S. I have sent a letter for my brother Arthur, which please to send only by a very safe & sure Conveyance —

TO [JAMES MADISON]<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON November 26. 1784

DEAR SIR,

I received your agreeable letter the day after mine of the 20<sup>th</sup> instant had been dispatched. I thank you Sir for the very particular, and satisfactory information that you have favord me with. It is certainly comfortable to know that the Legislature of our country is engaged in beneficial pursuits — for I conceive that the Gen. Assessment, and a wise digest of our militia laws are very important concerns; the one to secure our peace, and the other our morals. Refiners may weave as fine a web of reason as they please, but the experience of all times shews Religion to be the guardian of morals — And he must be a very inattentive observer in our Country, who does not see that avarice is accomplishing the destruction of religion, for want of a legal obligation to contribute something to its support. The declaration of Rights, it seems to me, rather contends against forcing modes of faith and forms of worship, than against compelling contribution for the support of religion in general. I fully agree with the

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Madison Papers, XIII. 140. A text of this letter with variations and omissions is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 51.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

presbyterians, that true freedom embraces the Mahomitan and the Gentoo as well as the Xn<sup>1</sup> religion and upon this liberal ground I hope our Assembly will conduct themselves. I believe there is no doubt but that the population of our country depends eminently upon our Revenue laws, they therefore, demand intense consideration. It is natural for men to fly from oppression to ease, and whilst our taxes are extremely heavy, and North Carolina & Georgia pay little or no tax it is not to be wondered that so many of our people flock to these States & unfortunately they are carrying to Georgia & South Carolina the Cultivation of Tobacco. I do not mean by this, that we should suffer ill example to prevent us from honorably and punctually paying our debts. But I think that we may fairly practise here, as other Nations the most honest do — I mean exactly to pay the interest, and slowly to sink the principal. An attempt to do the latter too suddenly, will ruin, by depopulating, the country. The only mode appears to be, a funding of the whole debt, so as certainly to pay the interest, and slowly the principal. Cannot a sinking fund be brought to bear upon the latter, by throwing all overflowings of taxes into a Reservoir for gathering interest upon interest? I suppose that at all events, the facilities offered by Congress in their Act of the 28<sup>th</sup> of April last will be among the amendments to the Revenue law this Session.

The people have certainly suffered much hitherto by not knowing in season what taxes are lawfully demandable from them — For want of this information, numbers are compelled to submit to the extortion and abuses of Collectors. The Treasurer used formerly to publish annually in the papers what were to be the Taxes of the year, and this practise was then very use-

<sup>1</sup> Christian.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ful — But at present, the dispersion of newspapers is so uncertain, that information thro that channel would reach but few. A Statement from the Treasury printed in the way of Hand bills, to be put up at the Court Houses & churches, might perhaps furnish the requisite information, & save the people from extensive abuse. I am very happy to know, for the honor of our country, that there is a probability of the impeding laws being again taken under deliberation. What I wrote to you in my last upon this subject, is a most serious consideration, and the inclosed paragraphs, taken from a late paper, will shew you how quickly the fame of our proceedings travels, and the effect likely to be produced upon our Commerce!

By the 5<sup>th</sup> article of the Confederation, the annual meeting of Congress is to be on the first Monday in November, and by an Act establishing one yearly meeting of the Assembly on the third monday in October; you will see Sir, that there is very little probability of Virginia being represented in Congress for some time after its federal day of meeting. So that it becomes necessary to consider this matter. I suppose that either the Assemblies time of meeting must be altered, or the Delegates for the ensuing federal year be chosen this present Session. We have not yet made a Congress but we have some reason to expect eight States on Monday next. I understand that Spain means to insist upon the exclusive navigation of the Mississippi, which will render the exploring our western waters of the greater importance.

I am dear Sir, with great esteem and regard Your most obedient and very humble Servant.

P.S. If the election of Counsellors is not over, may I be permitted to suggest what I really believe will improve and fortify the counsels of that Board — It is,

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that Major Gen. Gates be appointed a Member of it — He has a pretty good estate in Berkeley, is a single Man & therefore not withheld from due attendance by domestic considerations — But above all, he is a Man of great worth, solid judgement, and sound Attachments to America. — A propos — It is by many here suggested as a very necessary Step for Congress to take — The calling upon the States to form a Convention for the Sole purpose of revising the Confederation so far as to enable Congress to execute with more energy, effect, & vigor the powers assigned it, than it appears by experience that they can do under the present state of things — It has been observed, why do not Congress recommend the necessary alterations to the States as is proposed in the Confederation? The friends to Convention answer — It has been already done in some instances, but in vain. It is proposed to let Congress go on in the mean time as usual — I shall be glad of your opinion on this point, it being a very important one.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON Dec<sup>r</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> 1784

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have received your kind letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> ult<sup>o</sup> with the materials for breeches, all in good order, and I return you & the Council my very grateful acknowledgements — But how has it nappened that M<sup>r</sup> de Barthold has omitted to say what I owe him for these materials — Men of address in his way can find means to signify such things without giving offence. It is unlucky that my letter missed the favorable opportunity of going by Col<sup>o</sup> Johnston — But since it is so,

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

be so good as retain the letter until an opportunity equally good shall offer. I rely very much upon your goodness to contrive my horses back to Alexandria for me as quickly as possible, but why have you lost sight of the sending them by the Stage, if my friend Lee will interest himself about them? I do most sincerely wish that the old Gentleman could be prevailed on to come to Congress — Wisdom & firmness will not hurt that honorable body, wise as it is —

My best love always attend the family  
God bless you  
farewell —

TO THE MARQUIS [DE] LA FAYETTE<sup>1</sup>

TRENTON Decem<sup>r</sup> 11" 1784

THE MARQUIS LA FAYETTE

MY DEAR SIR,

I have the honor to enclose you a letter for the Minister plenipotentiary of the United States, at the court of his most Christian Majesty, which covers a letter to our great and good Ally, a copy of which I have also the pleasure to enclose for your satisfaction. — I assure you my dear friend that I feel myself singularly happy in observing the unanimous disposition that prevails in Congress to promote your glory, for I do most sincerely wish you every felicity that this world can afford.

I am, with unfeigned esteem and regard, My dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend.

<sup>1</sup>Copy. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 315.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO THE AMERICAN MINISTER TO FRANCE<sup>1</sup>

[RICHARD HENRY LEE]

[BENJAMIN FRANKLIN]

TRENTON Decem<sup>r</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> 1784

THE HON<sup>BLE</sup>

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ESQ<sup>R</sup>

Minister plenipotentiary from the  
United States of America to his most Christian Majesty  
SIR,

I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency, a packet for his most Christian Majesty containing a letter from Congress to that Monarch, recommending an able and active friend the Marquis la Fayette to his royal favour. The Marquis's former and recent services to America, deserve and have secured to him the warmest Attachments of these United States.

I have the honor to be with Sentiments of the highest respect and esteem, Sir,

Your Excellency's

Most Obedient & very humble  
Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>2</sup>

TRENTON dec<sup>r</sup> 13. 1784

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I replied to your kind letter conveying the materials for the breeches very soon after I received it — Since

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress (Letters of the Presidents of Congress), XVI. 315. This letter was evidently inclosed in the preceding letter. Lee was elected President of Congress November 30, 1784.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that I have not had the pleasure of hearing from you. The affairs of this world are wonderful thro-out their whole Ramifications — but I would not interrupt your improving studies by calling your attention to any subject less interesting —

As a matter of mere information I may inform you that upon a question to remove the Session of Congress from hence it was not determined in the affirmative.

My best love always attends your house — farewell.

Are my horses gone to Virginia?

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO THE POST  
MASTER AT NEW YORK<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

TRENTON December 14<sup>th</sup> 1784

THE POST MASTER AT NEW YORK

SIR,

I am directed by Congress to desire that [you] will immediately on the receipt of this, yourself deliver the enclosed packet to the Marquis de La Fayette who is now in New York with design to sail to-morrow — The business requires punctuality and dispatch, therefore you will please loose no time in delivering the packet.

I am Sir, your most humble Servant.

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 316.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO THE MARQUIS  
[DE] LA FAYETTE<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

TRENTON Decem<sup>r</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> 1784

THE MARQUIS LA FAYETTE

SIR,

In the name of Congress I am to request that you will be so kind as to deliver the enclosed letter to the Minister plenipotentiary of the United States at your Court, as soon after your arrival as may be convenient.

I heartily wish you my dear Marquis a pleasant Voyage and that you may find everything to make you happy on your Arrival in France.

I have the honor to be with Sentiments of the truest esteem and regard

dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and Obedient Servant.

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN<sup>2</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

TRENTON Decem<sup>r</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> 1784

HIS EXCELLENCY

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ESQ<sup>R</sup>

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency a resolve of Congress passed this Day, the arrival of which in due season to prevent the signing of the con-

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 316.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

vention alluded to, until an Opportunity of reconsidering it in full Congress may be had, will be very agreeable to that Body —

I have the honor to be with the highest esteem and regard, Sir,

Your Excellency's  
Most Obedient Servant.

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO WILLIAM  
DUER<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

TRENTON Decem<sup>r</sup> 14<sup>th</sup>, 1784

WILLIAM DUER ESQ<sup>R</sup>

SIR,

Your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> Inst. was this day received and laid before Congress — no immediate Order was taken upon it, if I may be permitted a conjecture, I would suppose that the enclosed resolve upon the subject of your letter was considered as the sense of Congress on that point — Should this not correspond with your idea, you will please to signify your opinion upon that point in a subsequent letter.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>2</sup>

TRENTON decem<sup>r</sup> 15, 1784

MY DEAR COUSIN

Your very kind congratulations on my appointment have, as they deserve, my cordial thanks; and it is the more grateful to me, since I find that my success oper-

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 317.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ates on your mind as an incentive to still greater exertions on your part to fit yourself for great employments. That will to me be a more valuable<sup>1</sup> good than any other that I expect to derive from my present honorable post. I am happy even in the contemplation of the satisfaction that I shall receive from seeing your father & yourself here in the course of the winter — Suffer me now to turn your attention to the affair of my Horses, and permit me to request your friendly aid in the disposal of them — Whether it be to sell them in Phil<sup>a</sup> or to send them to Virginia — At Alexandria the two will sell for £35, or 40 pounds our money — but how to get them there is the question. I believe from what you write, that the Stage will not do — Is it then possible, by the favor of the Post Master General to get them on by the Post upon my paying for their feeding as they go, and to the persons who convey them for their trouble in carrying them & taking care of them? If that plan fails, would it do to send the Presidents Coachman who is now at Philadelphia & who will not be wanting here probably in 10 or 12 days, at my private expence to carry them to M<sup>r</sup> Fendalls near Alexandria, and return in the Stage after delivering them — the propriety of this last mode depends much on calculation — the expence of his going with the two horses to Alexandria & returning by Stage will be at least £6 — or £7 which, supposing the horses to sell afterwards for £35 will reduce their value to £28 —

Then the question will be, wont the two sell even at auction in Phil<sup>a</sup> for £28 — if they will the trouble of sending may be avoided. In fact I had rather take £25 our money for the two than be at any further trouble & expence about them — If it should be thought advisable to send them to Virginia under all

<sup>1</sup> The two preceding words are substituted for “greater” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the difficulties attending the business — You are already in possession of a letter from me to M<sup>r</sup> Fendall to be carried with the horses. Whichever way you determine will please me, but of all the Modes I like that plan the least which proposes to send the Coachman with them — If M<sup>r</sup> Hazard, or the next principal Manager of the post would send a ticket to the different postmasters, they would impress on each Postrider the propriety of taking care of the horses.

It will give me much content to know that this business is well settled. M<sup>r</sup> Heilkeimer is a very knowing man in these affairs, he can advise well, and I should suppose that if he would take a little pains might sell them reasonably — I will readily pay him & thank him for his trouble —

My best love to the family, and my sincerest wishes for your health and prosperity — God bless you, farewell.

Late at night & in much haste.

TO [THE] GOVERNOR [OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

[PATRICK] HENRY

TRENTON, Dec. 18, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

We are placed now, I think, pretty nearly in the same political relation under which our former correspondence was conducted ; if it shall prove as agreeable to you to revive it, as you were then pleased to say it was to continue it, I shall be happy in contributing my part. The intelligence from hence cannot now be so interesting as formerly, because important events

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 247. A text of this same letter with unimportant variations and addressed to "Hon. E. Pendleton / Virginia" is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 53.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

can be expected to occur but seldom in these times. It is, however, not unpleasant to know how things are going, and likely to go, in the world ; that part of it at least in which we are in any manner interested. The courts of Spain and London do not seem to be upon such cordial principles with the United States as we might wish, the former seeming to be intent upon possessing, with a strong hand, the exclusive navigation of the Mississippi, and the latter has actually encroached already upon our peace boundary on the river St. Croix, and they detain the western posts ; assigning, for reason, that we have violated the peace by not repealing the laws that impede the recovery of British debts ; the court of London seems also willing to injure its own possessions in the West Indies, rather than not wound our commerce with British Isles. Much of this mischief arises from the want of a proper understanding of each other, and from the active industry and acrimonious misinformation that the exiled tories and refugees are constantly inculcating and asserting, without much danger of contradiction in having the truth fairly displayed. A well informed gentleman, in our ministry abroad, therefore, lately wrote us, that we could much better have dealt with these people among ourselves, than we can counteract the evils now resulting from their conduct abroad. This temper of the two courts will, however, produce the necessity of sending to each a well informed proper minister to negotiate commencing difficulties, and thereby prevent the evils of renewed war. It seems yet to be a matter of much doubt, whether the imperial determination to open up the long closed navigation of the Scheldt, and restoring Antwerp to its former splendour as a commercial city, will not light up a general war upon the continent of Europe. I hope that our dispute with Great Britain may be previously

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

settled. Our commissioners have concluded a peace with the six nations, and are now on their way to Cayahoga, on Lake Erie, to meet the western nations and to make a treaty with them also. I present you the compliments of the approaching season and assure you that

I am with great regard and esteem, Dear Sir,

Your Most obedient and very humble Servant,

To GOV<sup>r</sup> HENRY.

### THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

PATRICK HENRY

TRENTON December 24<sup>th</sup> 1784

SIR

I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency an ordinance of Congress passed yesterday for fixing the permanent and temporary residence of that body.

<sup>1</sup> The text is from a copy made by the Carnegie Institution of Washington. The original could not be located in the Virginia State Library. Signed by Lee as "P." [President].

A transcript of the circular letter sent to the governors of the States is in the Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 318, and is as follows :

" CIRCULAR

TRENTON Decem<sup>r</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> 1784

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency an Ordinance of Congress passed yesterday for fixing the permanent and temporary residence of that body.

With sentiments of great regard and esteem, I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your Excellency's  
Most Obedient Servant  
Richard Henry Lee "

In the letters for New Hampshire, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland & Georgia, the following was added : " I am desired by Con-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

With Sentiments of great regard and esteem I have the honor to be Sir your Excellencys Most obedient Servant.

His Excellency

PATRICK HENRY Esq<sup>r</sup>

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [GEORGE  
WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

TRENTON december 26<sup>th</sup> 1784

DEAR SIR,

I had the honor to receive your obliging letter, of the 14<sup>th</sup> instant, seven days after its date; and I thank you Sir for its friendly contents and sensible communications. Your ideas concerning the western country are wise and just. They will certainly have great weight when that business shall be discussed in Congress: and that will probably be the case soon after we know the success of our commissioners at Cayahoga.

Much time hath been taken up in debate upon the permanent and temporary residence of Congress, and finally it is determined that the former shall be on the banks of the Delaware, not exceeding eight miles above or below this place, and on either side of the river that may be fixt upon by commissioners to be appointed for the purpose of superintending the foederal buildings. New York is to be the temporary residence, and Congress stands now adjourned to meet in that City on

gress to request that you will be pleased to urge the Delegates from your State to repair to Congress as speedily as possible, to the end that the very important business now under consideration may receive the fullest, earliest and most mature deliberation."

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVI. 350. A text of this letter with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 54.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the 11<sup>th</sup> of January next — when I hope that we shall diligently put forward the public business. Spain seems determined to possess the exclusive navigation of the Mississippi, which, with the bickerings that appear already on that quarter, will oblige Congress to send an able Minister to Madrid. And one also to the Court of London, that we may, if possible, negotiate commencing differences, before they have proceeded too far. The western Posts are with-held, and an encroachment already made on our north-eastern boundary. An ambiguity in the Treaty arising from there being two rivers named S<sup>t</sup> Croix that empty into Passamaquady Bay has encouraged the British to settle the country between them — thus determining in their own favor the right to an extensive and valuable country — The fact is, that the easternmost of these rivers is the true S<sup>t</sup> Croix, the same name having been of late date only, applied to the westernmost of these waters. The very unfriendly commercial principles entertained by the B. Ministry and the disputes concerning debts and removed Negroes, are points of consequence also ; which together form a field for able and ample negotiation.

The Marquis Fayette had embarked for Europe before the letter for him that you enclosed came to my hands. I should be glad to know your pleasure concerning it — whether I am to send it on to France after him, or return it to you ?

My respectful compliments attend your Lady, and wishing you and her the compliments of the season ; I am, with very great esteem and regard, dear Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [JAMES  
MADISON]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

TRENTON dec<sup>r</sup> 27. 1784

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of the 11<sup>th</sup><sup>2</sup> reached me ten days after its date and after the post had gone out for that week, so that I fear this letter will not get to Richm<sup>d</sup> before the adjournment. The proceedings of last Assembly respecting B. debts have not yet been before Congress, because they have not arrived at this place — It seems that they were deposited in M<sup>r</sup> Hardys Trunk which a variety of accidents have prevented him from getting brought here before the adjournment of Congress, which took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> They have determined to make New York the place of their temporary residence, & the permanent one is to be on the banks of Delaware within 8 miles of this place, where the foederal buildings are to be erected as soon as possible — The new Congress meets on the first Monday in Nov<sup>r</sup> annually — Now it is plain that since the meeting of our Assembly is not until late in October, and as they seldom convene until long after the stipulated time, there is no probability of Virginia being represented for a considerable time after the foederal time appointed — North Carolina in the same situation, and to avoid the inconvenience has already sent forward her choice of Delegates for 1786 to take their seats on the 2<sup>d</sup> monday in Nov<sup>r</sup> 1785 — The Confederation says, to meet ON 1<sup>st</sup><sup>3</sup> Monday, yet the Credentials of most States, & ours among the number, has it *From*

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Library of Congress, Madison Papers, XIV. 3.

<sup>2</sup> This letter is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 218.

<sup>3</sup> Substituted for the figure “2” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday, which inaccuracy has caused some debates in Congress and is fitted to exclude Members for one day, and thereby, in some instances may be productive of inconvenience — this should be alter'd in our next form. I think the Assize law will improve much the dispensation of Justice in our Country, a thing devoutly to be wished — I am very apprehensive that a war with the Southern Indians will take place — Land Speculators, & Spanish jealousy will probably force it on, before our treaty with them can take place.

We have such momentous concerns with the two courts of Madrid & London, that we shall be obliged to send special Ministers to each of them, or else a war may be the consequence of neglect. M<sup>r</sup> Madison has been nominated for Spain, and is much approved by the Southern States — The conversation concerning a Continental Convention has ceased for some time, so that perhaps it may not be revived again. The pointed manner in which Spain insists upon the exclusive navigation of Mississippi renders it of more important consequence to explore & improve the navigation of the waters running thro our States. In a few days I proceed for N. York, having given a little time<sup>1</sup> for fitting a Presidents House there — The Members of Congress, except two or 3, are already departed for N. York & Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup>

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>3</sup>

MY DEAR COUSIN,

TRENTON dec<sup>r</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> 1784

I am very greatly obliged to you for your favor of the 24<sup>th</sup> instant and for your care of the horses — I

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “few days” erased.

<sup>2</sup> The space of about five lines including the signature is here cut out and the Ms. patched.

<sup>3</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

hope they will arrive safe and in good order. If M<sup>r</sup> Harrison is not disappointed, he will pay you eight pounds 4/6 for M<sup>r</sup> de Bartholts demand and for the 14 dollars due on account of transporting the horses. Your worthy father has given me reason to hope for his company here a few days before I go to N. York (which will be next Wednesday) and when he comes, let me entreat that you may accompany him — I keep a fine Saddle of Venison for you — My best love to him, to my dear Sister & Cousin Livingston —  
 God bless you, farewell.

14 dol <sup>s</sup>	£ 5.5.0
Taylors bill {	
for breeches {	2.19.6
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0;"/> £ 8.4.6

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [GENERAL  
 GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK Jan<sup>y</sup> 10. 1785

DEAR SIR,

I had the honor of writing to you last by the post that left Trenton just before I quitted that place, and I should not so soon have troubled you again, if it were not to furnish you with the very excellent pamphlet that accompanies this letter — Doctor Price has lately sent over a few of those pamphlets to the President of Congress and left the disposal of them to him — I am very sure that I shall gratify the Doctors feelings as well as my own, when I request your acceptance of one of them —

We have no news here, except the account, brot by the packet from England just arrived, and which is current in Town — That the war between the Emperor

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVII. 17.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

& Holland has certainly commenced A small engagement, near Lille upon the Scheldt, has taken place, in which a Dutch regiment is said to have lost 20 or 30 Men — Prussia is said to have taken part with Holland, & the Empress of Russia with the Emperor — It is probable that this quarrel, if it proceeds, will embroil the greatest part of Europe — I hope Great Britain will find herself compelled to engage.

My best respects attend your Lady. I am dear Sir, with the truest esteem & regard sincerely yours.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK JAN<sup>y</sup> 17. 1785

How has it happened that My dear Cousin hath not yet informed me how he and his companion the good Doctor escaped the perils of that dreadful frost that enveloped all nature when they left Trenton. I suppose that contemplating the Belles of Philadelphia kept the heart in such vigorous motion as to counteract all the severity of winter —

I have twice seen my sweet little Cousin Peggy Livingston since my arrival here — She is very pretty and very chatty, & loves her Uncle mightily — She promises to come to see me often when I get in the Presidents House, which will be this week, having hired M<sup>rs</sup> Franklins house in the street where little Peggy lives —

It is a very elegant House, and provided with every accommodation — I think that little Peggy is very much like her picture in your fathers House —

M<sup>r</sup> De Barthold has by this time I suppose rigged me out in such a manner as to convert the old President into a young Beau — Very well, if for the good

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of my Country I must be a Beau, why I will be a Beau—Col<sup>o</sup> Monroe is returned, and is now in this City, & so is Col<sup>o</sup> Spaight, so that I shall probably not get my clothes soon unless the kind Doctor is so good as to bring them—

My best love attends your father, Mother & Sister —  
God bless you—farewell.

TO THE MINISTER FROM THE NETHERLANDS TO  
THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup>

[PETER] VAN BERCKEL

NEW YORK, January 20, 1785.

SIR,

I have the honour to send your excellency two letters that came under cover from France. 'Tis with pleasure I learn from Mr. Adams, that it is probable the negotiations of this winter may prevent the progress of hostilities in the spring, between the United Netherlands, and the emperor. And also that the spirits of your countrymen suffer no dejection, but that on the contrary, they are with much diligence and wisdom composing party quarrels, and preparing for the defence of the republic. Be so good as to present my compliments to your son, and be assured that I am, with every sentiment of esteem and regard sir, your excellency's most obedient servant,

His Excellency Mr. VAN BACKLE,  
Minister Plenipotentiary from the  
United Netherlands.

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II, 55.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK 20<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>r</sup> 1785

MY DEAR COUSIN —

I am very thankful for your attention to my clothes which arrived safe yesterday. Having not yet tried them on, I cannot say how they may fit — I observe that the price is much higher than you supposed, for I think that you said yours cost 10 or 11 pounds — Mr. de Barthold is a man of honor and he can account for this difference — I do every day expect remittances from Virginia, and when they come, I shall take the earliest opportunity of sending M<sup>r</sup> De Barthold his money.

My Secretary Harrison tells me that the Country people bring to your Market for sale fine Yarn Socks — You will oblige me much by procuring and sending me two pair of such Socks — fine yarn, white, and for a Small foot as mine is very small when stripped. Those *worsted* Socks that I got at Phil<sup>a</sup> are so thin and low sided that I shall be in danger of getting cold if I wear them in winter after having been used to fine Yarn Socks and so high sided as to embrace the ancles.

I have been unlucky with my horses notwithstanding all my care — Hilkeimers bill with all the other demands will come to near £ 20 — however there is no helping it — I have not yet got into my House, but I have hired a very spacious and elegant one, where I shall be very happy to see you & your worthy father — The people here are very hospitable and kind I assure you — If it is in my power to serve your friend Cutting, I will do it with much pleasure upon your knowledge and opinion of him — My best love always attends the family — I am my dear Cousin Yours sincerely & affectionately.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I shall thank M<sup>r</sup> De Barthold for preserving for me Six small buttons & as many large ones like those on my new Clothes, for I fear by their looks that they will want replacing sometimes.

### THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

PATRICK HENRY

NEW YORK Jan 21st 1785

SIR,

I have the Honor to enclose to your Excellency some late communications from the ministers plenipotentiary of these United States at Paris, together with an act of Congress on that subject. Much inconvenience to the American Ministers abroad being apprehended from improper publications of their letters, hath induced Congress to desire that these informations may be kept from the public eye. The precarious State of our public credit abroad is so powerfully expressed in these letters as to render a comment unnecessary.

They prove incontestably the necessity of immediate, vigorous measures for supplying the treasury of the United States, that justice may be punctually done to those excellent friends who assisted us in the day of our distress. Your enlightened legislature, sir, will see the close connection that subsists between national safety and national faith, that the loss of the latter will ever have the most malignant effects upon the former.

The Congress request that your Excellency will lay these communications before the general assembly of

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 271. Signed by Lee as "P." [President].

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

your state with the act of Congress respecting them. I have the honor to be with sentiments of the truest esteem and regard Sir, Your Excellency's most obedient and very humble servant.

His Excellency PATRICK HENRY Esq.

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO JOHN  
RUTLEDGE<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

NEW YORK Jan<sup>y</sup> 24 " 1785

THE HONORABLE

JOHN RUTLEDGE Esq<sup>r</sup>

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose you an Act of Congress for forming a foederal Court to determine a controversy, respecting territory, that subsists between the States of Massachusetts and New York. The future concord and happiness of the United States depends so eminently upon the wise and early settlement of such disputes that both Congress and the Parties will be well pleased to find this court a full one, by the acceptance of all the Judges appointed to form it.

I have the honor to be with the highest esteem and regard

Sir, your Most Obedient and very humble  
Servant.

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 320.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [STATE  
GOVERNORS]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

NEW YORK January 24<sup>th</sup> 1785

Circular.

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency some late communications from the Ministers plenipotentiary of these United States a[t] Paris, together with an Act of Congress on that subject—Much inconvenience to the American Ministers abroad, being apprehended from improper publications of their letters, hath induced Congress to desire that these informations may be kept from the public Eye—The precarious state of our public credit abroad is so powerfully expressed in these letters as to render a comment unnecessary—They proove incontestably the necessity of immediate, vigorous measures for supplying the Treasury of the United States, that justice may be punctually done to those excellent friends who assisted us in the day of our distress—Your enlightened Legislature Sir will see the close connection that subsists between National safety and National faith—that the loss of the latter will ever have the most malignant effects upon the former.—The Congress request that your Excellency will lay these communications before the general Assembly of your State, with the Act of Congress respecting them.

I have the honor to be with sentiments of the truest esteem and regard. Sir,

Your Excellency's  
Most Obedient & very  
humble Servant.

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 319.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO DOCTOR  
BENJAMIN RUSH <sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

NEW YORK Feby 6. 1785

SIR,

I have received the letter that you did me the honor to write to me on the 16<sup>th</sup> of last month, and I lost no time in presenting to Congress the petition of the Trustees of Dickinson College — The petition was referred to the consideration of a Committee, but as yet no report has been made upon it.

Informing the minds of youth, is an object of such essential consequence to the well being of society, that I hope this proposition will meet with no difficulty; and it is a purpose so benevolent as well to deserve your fostering care and attention — I am particularly obliged to you Sir for your polite and friendly congratulation on my appointment to the Chair of Congress.

I have the honor to be Sir

Your most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO [DOCTOR WILLIAM SHIPPEN, JR.] <sup>2</sup>

N. YORK 7<sup>th</sup> Feby. 1785

MY DEAR SIR,

I am very happy to i[nform] <sup>3</sup> you that your friend D<sup>r</sup> Arthu[r Lee] <sup>3</sup> settled his affair with Congress [to his?] <sup>3</sup> entire satisfaction — My love [if you?] <sup>3</sup> please, to my excellent Nephe[w & tell?] <sup>3</sup> him that altho my

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Ridgway Library, Rush Correspondence, XLI. Pt. 1. 112.  
Addressed to him "in/Philadelphia//R. H. Lee." Endorsed, "Rich<sup>d</sup> H Lee —/ President of Congress,/letter on the Subject/of the public buildings/for the College."

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Margin of the Ms. torn away.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

finances, for want of remittances in this severe Season, prevents me from presently remitting to M<sup>r</sup> De Barthold his money, that it shall not be neglected when my remittances shall come — My love to you all — God bless you & farewell.

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [GENERAL  
GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

NEW YORK, feby 14<sup>th</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR,

In reply to your favor of december the 14<sup>th</sup> I had the honor to write you from Trenton, and I mentioned an enclosed letter from you for the Marquis Fayette, which coming to hand after the Marquis had sailed, I wished to know your pleasure, whether I should forward it to France or return it to you — I have not been honored with your commands upon that point. Soon after my arrival in this city, I sent you one of the few pamphlets addressed to the President of Congress by Doctor Price — it will give me pleasure to know that you have received it. The commissioners for treating with the western Indians did yesterday present to Congress the Treaty that they have made with the Wyandots, Delawares &c. A copy of the Treaty I have now the honor to enclose you. The Shawanese, you observe, are not there — it seems that persons, disaffected to us, prevented them from meeting the Commissioners.

The Wyandots being stated as their superiors, may

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVII. 69. A text of this letter with variations and lacking the postscript is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 56. For Washington's reply, see *ibid.*, II. 32.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

perhaps prevent any mischief from the Shawanese not being included in this Treaty —

Another Treaty will be held with the more Southern Indians in the spring or first of the Summer — The policy, seems to be a good one, of enclosing as it were, the Indian nations within our acknowledged territory — It will probably tend to civilize them sooner, and by preventing intrigues with them, render them more certainly our friends.

The Court of Spain has appointed M<sup>r</sup>. Gardoque their Chargé des affaires to the United States, and we have reason soon to expect his arrival — We are to apprehend a very firm *ostensible* demand from him, of the exclusive navigation of the Mississippi. His secret orders touching an Ulterior agreement may be another thing.

Time and wise negotiation will unfold this very important matter, and I hope may secure to the U.S. and those Individual States concerned, the great advantages that will be derived from a free navigation of that river.

My respects, if you please, to your Lady, whose health I hope is perfectly reestablished.

I have the honor to be, with the truest respect and esteem, Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

P.S. I was honored with your favor of the 8<sup>th</sup> of feb<sup>y</sup> with its enclosures after the above letter was written —

I will shortly reply to its contents, and your letter for the Marquis shall be forwarded to France —

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA

[PATRICK] HENRY

DEAR SIR,

NEW YORK, February 14, 1785

Your favor of December<sup>2</sup> 9th, has just now been put into my hands, together with the printed papers that you were pleased to send me, but I have not yet had the pleasure of finding Colonel Grayson here. I do sincerely wish to see my country flourish and be happy, so that if by any means in my power, I can contribute to this most desirable end, I shall certainly exert myself. No time or circumstance can ever force from my mind, the sincere affections that I entertain for the original friends to the just rights of America, whose wise and firm perseverance has secured to the United States at last the blessings, without which there is little difference between men and brutes. The ill state of health that I contracted at Richmond in May 1783, still afflicts me, which, added to the business and the ceremony of my present office<sup>3</sup> afflicts me much, and must necessarily prevent me from such frequent communications as otherwise I should undoubtedly make. With respect to official intelligence from Europe, we have none of great consequence; Mr. Adams thinks, that the negotiations of this winter will properly accommodate the difference between the emperor and the United Netherlands, and our charge des affairs at Madrid, informs us that the court of Spain has appointed Mr. Gardoque to come here as their minister, and we expect him daily. His purpose is to treat of

<sup>1</sup> From the text in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 277. A text with minor variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Probably an error for January. See William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 265, 277 n.

<sup>3</sup> President of Congress.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

commerce, and territorial limits. Our ministers at Paris are generally proposing treaties of amity and commerce with all the European commercial powers, and they receive answers very civil, but as yet no treaties formed, except such as you have seen notified from Congress. As you have been pleased to desire my reflections upon the state of affairs, I will give them freely, as they appear to me. The courts with which we are most immediately concerned, are Spain, England, France and Holland; the two first because we border on them, and because we have with each most pressing difficulty; the two last, because we are indebted to them both on the score of money lent, and friendship in other ways conferred. Spain is proud, and extremely jealous of our approximation to her South American territory, and fearing the example of our ascendancy upon that country, is grasping forever at more territory, by way of security; and hoping to derive benefit to her system, from our want of system, our discord and inattention. Hence we may expect from Mr. Gardoque, an apparent firm demand of the exclusive navigation of the Mississippi, with some tempting commercial offers to procure our assent to the loss of this very valuable navigation. But probably the apprehension of a quarrel with us, and the effect of it upon their South American possessions, may secure to us, if we are wise and firm, the free navigation to be finally agreed to by Spain. With Great Britain, our difficulties will be greater; equally proud with Spain, and much more powerful, with fewer reasons to fear a rupture with us, and more to hope from a successful one; she remains sullen after defeat and seeming to wish for just provocation to renew the combat. The passions of states and of individuals are not very different; for what are the former, but a compound of individuals, and of course carrying into the



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

composition those leading principles that characterize the parts. In private life a wise and fortunate victor, over great strength, would, in all his conduct with the vanquished show a respectful civility, avoiding every display of supposed superiority, and carefully shunning every appearance of giving cause for fresh offence. It seems to me that if the conduct of America had been founded on such principles, our magnanimity must have been confessed, and that the seeds of future discord would not have been so effectually sown as I fear they are. Both countries have been to blame, and transgressions against the terms of peace were on each side coeval, so that whilst we charged them with removing the slaves from New York, they pointed to the violence with which their friends were every where treated, with the detention of their debts, and with actions here brought against those who possessed houses in this city whilst it was in their power by the fortune of war. This again is followed by their detention of the western posts, by their encroachments on our north-eastern boundary about St Croix, and by their unfriendly interruption of our commerce, and lately by arresting in London a merchant of Philadelphia for debt, because his privateer had taken during the war a vessel belonging to the complainant. This is an unpleasant state of things, and if temper and wisdom are not employed on both sides, it is not difficult to foresee a renewed rupture ere long. The principles of republics being virtuous, and their conduct therefore squaring with justice, they rather negotiate difficulties than fight them. Monarchies depend too much upon the *ultima ratio regum*. When we have acted fully up to our principle, we shall be upon strong ground to combat theirs. But the cause of virtue, without proper means to support it, must often fail. These considerations lead me to wish most sincerely that my country may

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

quickly cease to give the smallest cause for just offence, and that our rulers would engrave upon their minds the wisdom of the inscription upon the arsenal of Berne in Switzerland — “That people happy are, who, during peace, prepare the necessary stores for war.”

It is in vain for us to expect this from the United States—to be secure each state must provide amply for itself; and whenever Great Britain shall find us just, temperate and prepared, she will be extremely cautious of hostile aggressions, or of unjust treatment of us. If this reasoning be right, how will your excellency’s administration be marked for wisdom, if effectual attention be paid to the collection and preservation of military stores. I have here been informed, by an officer of rank in the continental artillery at the surrender of York, that several pieces of our artillery were retaken from the enemy, and that they are now at Philadelphia; it deserves to be considered, whether these are not subject to be returned to us upon demand of the State; there were also several pieces of our artillery thrown into Pamunkey river, near New Castle, in 1781, and some other pieces fixed in the ground and in vain attempted to be destroyed by the enemy. Baron Steuben lately sent us the enclosed letter, which I have now the honour to transmit; his published plan is only an outline, but the details by which that plan is to be executed he professes himself willing to communicate, when the state of Virginia shall call upon him, for them. The sum of this, (I fear, too long digression, upon our relative situation with Great Britain,) is, that being secure of having done right, we should be fully prepared to meet aggressions from that quarter; a sentiment founded upon an attentive consideration of the correspondence between the British generals, during the late war, by which it is not difficult to discover that experience had instructed them

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

in this truth, that a war against the United States had better be pushed in full force at first against Virginia. I have before observed to your Excellency, that Mr. Adams thought we might expect a compromise between Holland and the Emperor, from the negotiations of this winter ; it is certain that every influence of France will be used to effect the compromise for reasons very obvious ; but, whilst the Emperor demands as preliminary, that the Scheldt shall be opened, and Holland as peremptorily says, that it must not, it remains possible, but not probable, that an accommodation may take place : if it does not, the powers on the continent will be engaged in a most expensive war, whilst, as it seems, Great Britain will remain neuter, and by peace, preparing herself for war, render her hostile views more dangerous to us. The apprehension of this difficulty on the part of our friends, has probably produced the strong intimations that we must be exact in the payment of our interest upon the foreign loans ; and the same reason does indeed call upon the United States, in the strongest sense, to be punctual in their payments, that those who have assisted us in the day of our distress, may not suffer for their generosity.

The attention of Congress, has been applied to our western concerns, as your Excellency will see by the treaties made with the Six Nations, and the Western Indians. In the latter, the Shawanese are not included, but their being prevented by some active British emissary, from coming to the latter treaty, will probably not be attended with ill consequences, as they are very much under the control of the Six Nations, and of the Wyandots, their powerful neighbours. The spring will open further treaties with the more southern tribes north-west of the Ohio, and also on the south-eastern side, upon ours, and the frontiers of North and South Carolina and Georgia.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Judging from myself, I suppose your excellency will be tired with the length of this letter, and if you will pardon it, I promise you that I will not again transgress in the same manner. I have the honour to be, with sentiments of esteem, respect, and regard, sir, your Excellency's most obt serv't,

His Excellency, Gov. HENRY.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK feby 17. 1785

MY DEAR COUSIN —

Your favor of the 15<sup>th</sup> instant I rec<sup>d</sup> this day, and I delivered the enclosed Almanac to M<sup>r</sup> Hardy who returns you his thanks. Col<sup>l</sup> Livingston delivered me your letter immediately on his arrival in this City, and I should certainly have answered it long before now, if I had not been prevented by ill health, and great pressure of business. You need not doubt my affectionate attention to you, and I rely upon your goodness always to attribute my silence to good reasons. I am from all parts of the U. S. written to in my private capacity, so that I am at this moment at least 20 letters in arrear to my correspondents — To answer them all punctually would at once destroy my health, and prevent all attention to public business. I do assure you, that the business, and the ceremonies of my office, are too much for my feeble state of health — In your letter with my Cloths you state the Taylors bill at £15. 4. 6 — Journeyman 7/6 Package 7/6 and additional expence of conveying my horses to Virginia £3.10. making in the whole £19. 9. 6 — M<sup>r</sup> Wilson has promised me to take charge of this money for you, so that I shall send you by him

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

eleven guineas and a french crown, making £19. 13. 4 which will be a ballance in my favor of 3/10, which may perhaps pay for the Socks. I pray you my dear Sir not to forget my Gun & Sword that I left under your care — The first to be cleaned, and the lock to be put in order and prevented from falling at half bent — I wished to know the expence of refitting the Sword — After you left Trenton I saw a Stock buckle in my Ink stand, and enquired about it — it was not known to whom it belonged, but I have remembrance of directing care to be taken of it, altho I have totally forgotten what was done with it, and I now cannot find or hear anything about it — If it should be found I will certainly take good care of it for you.

I have received (and answered) a letter from our friend M<sup>r</sup> F. Corbin — My best affections never fail to attend your father & his family

I am my dear Nephew your sincerely affectionate.

TO THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK 22 feby 1785

MY DEAR COUSIN,

By favor of M<sup>r</sup> Prager our common friend, I send you eleven guineas and a french crown, which will pay M<sup>r</sup> de Barthold and the ballance of my horses, and leave a few shillings for the [S]ocks — At Trenton I gave my dear Nephew a Memorandum of a large dressed hide proper for covering the Top and repairing the Sides of our Charriot — I shall be happy to know that this small commission is executed. Being in haste, I have only time to present my best love to the family,

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. Addressed, “Thos<sup>s</sup> Lee Shippen Esq<sup>r</sup>/in/Philadelphia//honored by/M<sup>r</sup> Prager.”



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

it would be unnecessary to assure you that I am sincerely and affectionately yours.

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [GENERAL  
GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

NEW YORK feby 27<sup>th</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR,

I am now to thank you for the letter that you did me the honor to write to me on the 8<sup>th</sup> of this month, and which I received on the 17<sup>th</sup> with the enclosures.

Sir James Jay had mentioned the plan of Lady Huntingdon to me, previous to the receipt of your letter, and at the same time that your packet reached me, there came one to Congress from Governor Henry with her Ladyships letter and plan enclosed, which the Governor strongly recommended. It was presently observed that the terms upon which lands had been ceded to the United States did not leave it in the power of Congress to dispose of them for any purpose but for paying the debts of the public by a full and fair sale of all the ceded lands — It was indeed remarked, that those religious people whom her Ladyship had in prospect to transplant & fix on our frontier were remarkable in the late war for an unanimous and bitter enmity to the American cause, and as such might form a dangerous settlement at so great a distance, contiguous to the Indians, & easily accessible to Canada. Especially in the present very unfriendly temper of mind that we now<sup>2</sup> suppose the British nation possesses with respect to us. It was therefore ordered that Governor Henry's letter with the enclosures should be filed, but nothing

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXV. 267.

<sup>2</sup> The word "know" had been written here, but the letter "k" is erased and "suppose" is inserted above the line.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

more done in the affair — Finding this, I concluded it not necessary to shew your letter, either publicly or privately — I have therefore returned to you, Lady Huntingdon[’s] packet. It appears to me, that Georgia is the most likely State in the Union to close with her Ladyship, if the latter argument mentioned in Congress should not prevent it. I am sorry to hear that you are so interrupted by applications that ought not to be made — I hope however that you will not suffer them so to prevent your necessary exercise, as to injure your health.

The investigating and opening our western navigation is an object of great importance and well worthy of your patronage — I believe, as I hope, that it will be found by experience to be of great utility both to the public and to the private adventurers. Very little has yet been done in Congress respecting the Western Country — but a very full discussion of that business will soon come on, when it is to be expected that our affairs in that quarter will be put under better regulation than hitherto they have been. The mischiefs that experience & reason both join in proving to flow from the Sessions of Congress being held in our large Citys, produced the necessity of determining on some place of easy retirement for the federal government, and the unhappy neglect of attendance on the part of the Southern States has furnished an opportunity for a Majority in Congress to fix on a spot too excentric —

My wishes would have been to have gone further south, but of two evils it was best to choose the least, and therefore we thought it better to fix somewhere in retirement than to continue wandering, or to fix in the midst of dissipation.

We had but just determined upon sending a Minister to the Court of London (M<sup>r</sup> John Adams) when this day 28<sup>th</sup> feb<sup>y</sup>, we receive a letter from our Commis-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

sioners for making treaties &c at Paris, the copy of a letter from the Duke of Dorset, Minister from London to Versailles, to our Ministers, in answer to a proposition from them for making a treaty of Commerce with G. Britain & for settling other points of difficulty arising from the late peace — In which his Grace declares the determination of his Court to be ready to settle all these affairs upon terms of equal & lasting good to both countries whensoever the U. States shall send to their Court a Minister properly authorized for the business — This looks well at least — and we shall shortly make the experiment of their sincerity — The King of Prussia thinks that there will be no war between the Emperor & Holland, and indeed it does now seem probable that his judgement will prove right — I have sent the letter you committed to my care for the Marquis on to France by the packet.

I have the honor to be, with the highest esteem and regard dear Sir Your most obedient & very humble Servant.

TO THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK March 3<sup>d</sup> 1785

I have made such effectual inquiry after my dear Cousins stock buckle, that I have found it and safely deliverd it to my brother A. Lee. The world has assigned to you politeness equal to the good sense that distinguishes you — By what strange fatality then has it happened, that the concerns of a Lady have been neglected by you? I learn from Chantilly that a young Lady of that place had a pair of Set Shoe buckles committed to your care by her brother Tho:<sup>s</sup> Lee some years ago to get repaired — And that to this day the workman has not made the necessary repara-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

tion! I thought that the Tradesmen in Philadelphia were more punctual — but this fellow has taken the advantage of your engagements in law study to neglect this business, which he would not have dared to do, if your piercing eye had been upon him —

Will you be pleased to recollect this matter and inform me in what Train it is — I suppose that our good friend M<sup>r</sup> Prager has delivered you the Guineas that I sent by him —

How proceeds the Leather covering for the Top & Sides of my Chariot, or have you yet met with an opportunity of sending it to Virginia? In the month of April, I suppose the Chair-Maker will commence his operation upon my most elegant, and strong, and every way complete Chair — Trunk, Box &c — I rely a good deal upon yours & my good friend the Doctors admonitions to the Artist, that he may be induced to exert his *honest art* most fully upon this little Machine — My Gun and Sword cannot forget that they are under your protection, and much want repair — God knows when I shall get away from this place, but I know, that if your Worthy father would honor me with his company here that the best Campaign should be plentifully at his call — God bless you and the whole family prays sincerely my dear Cousin  
Your affectionate Uncle & friend.

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]

NEW YORK March 14. 1785 --

MY DEAR SIR,

Your favors (for I am always favored when you are pleased to write to me) by M<sup>r</sup> Walker of the 9<sup>th</sup>, and

<sup>1</sup> L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 60.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

by Captain Landais of the 10<sup>th</sup> of December were duly delivered to me by those gentlemen, and without loss of time I laid them before Congress—Their applications have been referred to very good Committees, so that there is reason to expect that these Gentlemen will receive just and satisfactory determinations from Congress. Your very friendly and sensible letter of the 23<sup>d</sup> of the same month deserves my sincerest thanks and approbation, which with great cordiality I present to you.—My ill health (with much business and the necessary attention to the ceremonies of my office) prevents me from being so punctual a correspondent as I wish to be—but I well know that your goodness will excuse me—It is the part of a friend to advise, and of a well disposed mind to profit from good counsel. I shall certainly endeavor to benefit from your judicious sentiments. Very much it is to be wished that all who are in authority, discerned with you that the eyes of the world are upon us, that great expectations are formed from great beginnings, and that wisdom and virtue can alone satisfy such just expectations. It is however much too correspondent with human nature to exult “beyond measure,” and thereby to neglect those duties that better sentiments ought to inspire. To this cause may perhaps be attributed much of the inattention and violence that have too generally taken place since the preliminary articles were made known to us. Whether in public or in private life it seems most becoming wise men in the time of victory and success, to practice the virtues of Magnanimity and Justice, to avoid the display of irascible passions, by effectually “burying the hatchet” as our Aborigines express the idea. Without this philosophic temper, what would become of mankind governed as they too generally are by Tyrants whose caprice forceth Nations into War? Endless carnage and evil without bounds



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

must be the result. The philanthropy that I revere and admire in your character must revolt at the contemplation of it. And I think that the Christian philosophy, in tenderness for human infirmities strongly inculcates principles of mutual forgiveness and benevolence. These reflections have been created in my mind by that kind of exultation "beyond measure," which you so wisely deprecate, and which I have seen so much to prevail as to injure in my idea that greatness of character, which had dignified America in her resistance to British Tyranny. For I am not disposed to admit Revenge as a just plea for such extravagancies, altho a well judged system of measured politics may be admissible. The selfishness and corruption of Europe I have no doubt about, and therefore wish most sincerely that our free Republics may not suffer themselves to be changed and wrongly wrought upon by the corrupt maxims of policy that pervade European Councils—where artful and refined plausibility is forever called in to aid the most pernicious designs. It would seem as if there were a general jealousy beyond the water, of the powerful effects to be derived from Republican virtue here, and so we hear a constant cry from thence, echoed & re-echoed here by all Expectants from the Treasury of the United States—That Congress must have more power—That we cannot be secure & happy until Congress command implicitly both purse & sword. So that our confederation must be perpetually changing to answer sinister views in the greater part, until every fence is thrown down that was designed to protect & cover the rights of Mankind. It is a melancholy consideration that many wise & good men have, some how or other, fallen in with these ruinous opinions. I think Sir that the first maxim of a man who loves liberty should be, never to grant to Rulers

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

an atom of power that is not most clearly & indispensably necessary for the safety and well being of Society. To say that these Rulers are revocable, and holding their places during pleasure may not be supposed to design evil for self-aggrandizement, is affirming what I cannot easily admit. Look to history and see how often the liberties of mankind have been oppressed & ruined by the same delusive hopes & falacious reasoning. The fact is, that power poisons the mind of its possessor and aids him to remove the shackles that restrain itself. To be sure, all things human must partake of human infirmity, and therefore the Confederation should not be presumptuously called an infallible system for all times and all situations—but tho' this is true, yet as it is a great and fundamental system of Union & Security, no change should be admitted until proved to be necessary by the fairest fullest & most mature experience. Upon these principles I have ever been opposed to the 5 P Cent imposts, My idea is still that of the Confederation, Fix the sum, apportion it & let every State by its own means, and in its own way faithfully & honestly make its payment. That the now federal mode of apportionment is productive of delay, of great expence, and still liable to frequent change, is certain. And therefore I see no inconvenience in so far altering the Confederation as to make the Rule of Apportionment lie upon the numbers as stated in the recommendation of Congress upon that Subject. But I can never agree that this Body shall dictate the mode of Taxation, or that the collection shall in any manner be subject to Congressional controul. It is said that this will more effectually secure the Revenue — But how so? if a spirit prevails to neglect a duty imposed by the Confederation, may not the same spirit render abortive at any time Acts passed for granting the Impost? Be-

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sides that we are depending for the payment of our debts upon uncertainty, when the most certain revenues of the State ought to be appropriated for that purpose. Whilst every good man wishes great punctuality to prevail in the payment of debts, he must at the same time condemn and discourage large importations which impoverish by increasing the balance of trade against us. So that from this system we are to expect our greatest good from our greatest evil. A good physician will tell you that contrary indications of cure threaten danger to human life, and by a just parity of reason, contrary indications threaten danger to the Political body. But happily for us, our political disease admits of simple remedies for its cure, if rightly judged of, and wisely practised upon. Let it be therefore the effort of every Patriot to encourage a punctual payment of each State's quota of the foederal demand, and let the money be found in ways most agreeable to the circumstances of every State. This is the plan of the Confederation, and this I own will be mine, until more satisfactory experience has proved its inefficacy. —

A word more upon the point of our just wishes to be detached from<sup>1</sup> European politics, and European vices. of course I wish it most sincerely. But unfortunately Great Britain is upon our Northern quarter and Spain upon the Southern. We are therefore compelled to mix with their Councils in order to be guarded against their ill designs. I am very happy to hear from my friend M<sup>r</sup> Lovell that you are in health and spirits, and that you still delight to speak of politics. There is nothing in this life that would give me more happiness than to see & converse with you in Boston—but Alas! I fear that my poor state of health will deny me this pleasure—yet at all times

<sup>1</sup> The word “the” is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE<sup>1</sup>

and in every place, I shall be dear Sir your most affec<sup>te</sup> friend.

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK April the 7<sup>th</sup> 1785

My much valued friends letter of March the 24<sup>th</sup> was this day delivered to me, but not by M<sup>r</sup> Kirkland or Col<sup>o</sup> Allan, it came from our Door-keeper who told me that it had been pickt up on Long Island. I received it however, with that true content that your letters always bring with them — You have certainly done me justice when you have taken me for an *Unchanging Friend*. I endeavored not to take up friendships lightly, and therefore I am not capable of lightly laying them down — But in this case, I am much too sensible of the honor done me by your friendship not to wish most sincerely for its continuance. And the true reason for want of punctuality in writing, I assigned to you in my letter of March 14<sup>th</sup> last. The reasons there assigned will, I hope, secure for me your pardon for having employed an Amanuensis (my Nephew Shippen) upon that letter.

Your recommendation of Mess<sup>rs</sup> Kirkland & Allen are very sufficient to procure for them my utmost favor — Have you observe[d] that I have personal knowledge of the deserts recommended — I have, but it was not necessary when I reflected who it was that recommended —

I hope that we have gained your approbation by sending our Patriot friend M<sup>r</sup> J. Adams Minister to London. I hope also for good things from that Mis-

<sup>1</sup> L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. Endorsed, "Letter from R. H. Lee Es — / April 1785."



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sion. Spain seems mal-affected to us, but as she has a commencing dispute with Great Britain about the Musquetto Shore, perhaps we may find in her Minister, expected here this month, a more accommodating Spirit concerning the Mississippi than has yet appeared. I am, with sincerest sentiments of esteem,  
My dear Sir your affectionate friend.

My best wishes attend M<sup>rs</sup> Adams.

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK April 14 1785

MY DEAR SIR.

The desire of paying my respects to an old and excellent friend compels me under all the pressures of ill health and much business, to avail myself of Col-Smith's secure conveyance to take up my pen. It is long since I have written to you, but much longer since I have had the honor of hearing from you, and I am perfectly satisfied that both these effects have been produced by causes not fairly within our controul — perhaps the same obstructions may not prevail hereafter and if they do not I shall be happy. Whilst I congratulate you on being appointed sole Minister to so eminent a Court as that of London I cannot help congratulating my Country at the same time, for the just expectations that may be formed from the wisdom, patriotism, and diligence of its Minister. The untoward circumstances in which both countries are found to be placed, may have arisen from a neglect of decent and proper respect having been heretofore paid to each other — and if so, this advance on our part, may lead to the establishment of better conduct and hap-

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original supplied through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

pier consequences. That it may be so, may God of his infinite mercy, grant. So far, I think that I pray devoutly for the honorable success of your Mission — Col. Smith can give you so accurate a state of things here that it seems not necessary for me to enlarge on them — but with respect to this Gentleman, and his appointment, permit me to observe, that his established reputation is that of a Man of honor, of sense, and of very tried attachment to the success of our Union. His appointment (I mean the office) seems as far as I have been able to investigate it, from a wish to show respect to the Court of London by an exact observance of all forms in such cases practised.

I believe that Congress will adjourn (leaving a Committee of the States) In June next — So that when you find leisure and inclination to honor me with a letter, by sending it to the house of Wallace, Johnson & Muir my Correspondents in the City of London, they will forward your letter safely to me.

I heartily wish you every honor and success in life that you can wish yourself.

Your affectionate friend.

TO GENERAL [GEORGE] WASHINGTON<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, April 18, 1785.

DEAR SIR —

I should before this have thanked you for your favour of March 15th, if I had not been in daily expectation that the arrival of the packets would bring us some intelligence from Europe worth communicating to you; the February packet has but just come in after a passage of eight weeks, and neither she or

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 63.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

other vessels in short passages, bring us any thing interesting. War or peace in Europe, hangs yet in doubtful balance; both parties arming with assiduity, and nothing determined upon. Mr. John Adams, is sent plenipotentiary to the court of London, and Mr. Jefferson is the minister at Versailles, Dr. Franklin having leave, at his own request, to retire. Returning appearances of good humour, and a proposition first made by the British court, to treat of our differences in London, has induced hopes of an amicable adjustment of disputes. Mr. Gardoque is not arrived, but expected about the last of this month from the Havana, to which place he went from Spain previous to his coming here. If the commenced bickering between Madrid and London on the Musquito shore should go on, we may probably have easier work with both courts in our business with them. I have the honour to enclose you the report of a respectable committee on the subject of selling the western lands, which has not yet been acted upon, though it speedily will. What changes may be made in this plan before it finally passes, cannot yet be told, but probably there will be some. Your idea of settling a state at a time, would most certainly be the wisest and the best, if the excessive rage for taking lands there could be possibly restrained. But really it seems that either Congress must sell quickly, or possession will be so taken as to render doubtful this fine fund for extinguishing the public debt. It has been impossible to get a vote for more than seven hundred men to garrison all the posts to be fixed in the trans-Alleghanian country, from north to south; a number very inadequate, I fear, to the purpose of even suppressing illegal trespasses upon the western lands. Our friend the Marquis La Fayette, arrived after a short passage, but I believe it was a very boisterous one. Your letter for Mr. Lee I sent

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

after him to Virginia, whither he was returning before I received it. My best respects attend your lady.

I have the honour to be, with the truest esteem and regard, dear Sir, your most obedient and very humble servt.

General WASHINGTON.

TO CH[ARLES] McEVERS<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK April 27. 1785

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose a letter for M<sup>r</sup> Huntington which I sincerely wish may be fortunate enough to avail you in the just application that you are making to the Assembly of Connecticut.

If it can be in my power to serve you in any other manner, freely command me.

I have the honor to be Sir your most obedient & very humble Servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Connecticut State Library, Revolutionary War, XXVIII., No. 275. The address, "Ch. McEvers, Esquire" which appears on the face of the manuscript is not in Lee's handwriting, but is probably copied from the reverse side which is pasted to the bound page. According to statements made, *ibid.*, XXVIII., No. 268 (October 24, 1784), Charles McEvers in May 1775 retired from New York to Jamaica, L. I., where he remained peaceably during the war, rendering no aid to the enemy, but assisting American prisoners. His property in New York and New Jersey was not confiscated, and he asked at this time that the decree confiscating his property in Connecticut might be annulled.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [THE] GOVERNOR [OF NEW JERSEY]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

WILLIAM L. LIVINGSTON

NEW YORK April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1785

HIS EXCELLENCY  
GOVERNOR LIVINGSTON

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose to your Excellency an Act of Congress that has been produced by a very pressing state of the public affairs. Your Excellency will observe that exclusive of other important business, Congress points to two objects particularly, — the requisition for the present year, and an Ordinance for disposing of lands in the western Territory — The honor and justice of the United States is much concerned in the former, and upon the wise, speedy, and effectual execution of the latter, essentially depends the future ease, happiness and prosperity of the people — it is indeed true that thinner houses are compitent to the first digestion and preparation of business like this, but such is the nature of the foederal constitution that a full Congress is necessary to the final completion of Objects great as those which are now under consideration — I am therefore, by desire of Congress, to request that your Excellency will be pleased to exert your fullest influence with the Delegates of your State to repair immediately to Congress —

I have the honor to be with great respect and esteem,  
Sir, Your Excellency —

most Obedient Servant.

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 321. A similar letter was written to the Governors of Connecticut, Delaware, and Georgia.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [GENERAL  
GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

NEW YORK May 3<sup>d</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR,

I have long had a letter prepared for you in answer to your last favor which I have kept for the honorable M<sup>r</sup> Sitgreaves to be the bearer of, as he proposed to visit you on his return to North Carolina; and the more especially as his stay has been occasioned by the necessity of seeing the very important ordinance passed for selling the western lands, which I wished you to have in its perfected state — The principal design of this letter is, to introduce to you M<sup>r</sup> Graham, and his Lady the justly celebrated M<sup>rs</sup> Macauley Graham, whose reputation in the learned world and among the friends to the rights of human nature is very high indeed. Her merit as an Historian is very great, and places her as an Author in the foremost rank of writers. I am well pleased to find that she, as well as all other judicious foreigners, think themselves when in America, however distant from Mount Vernon, obliged to pay their respects to you. I believe that this has been her only motive for going so far South as Virginia. We are amused here with an account that does not indeed come officially to us, but however, in such a way as to merit attention — It is, a plan of the Emperor of Germany, which seems calculated to quiet his quarrel with Holland, altho perhaps it may not prevent a war in Europe — He is said to have made a treaty with the Elector of Bavaria, by which he exchanges his Netherland dominions for those of Bavaria, and trans-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVII. 227.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

fers with the exchange, all his rights and claims upon Holland: reserving Namure and Luxembourg with a district of country around, as a *doucoeur* to France for obtaining the consent of that Court to the exchange. The Bavarian dominions being much more contiguous to the Austrian than those of the<sup>1</sup> Netherlands, must greatly increase the Emperors power by a concentration of his force, heretofore so much divided, as to render the Netherlands of no great aid in case of War.

This however, by increasing the Austrian power, must of course excite greatly the jealousy of Prussia in particular, whose King will probably risk a war rather than see his Rival thus strengthened. Holland in the mean time will be relieved, by injurious claims being transferd from a strong to a weak hand, and the Emperor may find himself brought to a more equal contest by combating one, instead of three powers lately combined against him. What may be the issue of this new System, time must develope. I wish that I may be enabled by M<sup>r</sup> Sitgreaves to furnish you with the final sense of Congress upon the momentous business of selling the western lands, in doing which, the first and greatest object seems to be, the discharging effectually the great weight of debt that the war has created, and which obstructs so effectually every arrangement for future security.

I have the honor to be, with sentiments of the sincerest respect and esteem dear Sir Your most obedient and very humble Servant.

<sup>1</sup> The word "Austrian" is here erased.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO COLONEL [JOHN?] FITZGERALD<sup>1</sup>

[May 4, 1785]

\* \* \* \* \* We have no news here of any consequence. The Emperor's Quarrel with the Dutch seems to be quieted, but it is not improbable that a war between him & Prussia will take place. Congress has taken the most effectual steps in their power to quiet the Barbary Pirates so as to prevent their hostilities upon our Commerce \* \* \* \* \*

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [GENERAL  
GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>2</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

NEW YORK May 7<sup>th</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR,

This will be delivered to you by the honorable M<sup>r</sup> Sitgreaves a very worthy delegate to Congress from N. Carolina; who has been long detained by his desire to see the Land Ordinance passed, but he is obliged at last to quit us before it is finally so — The reasons he can give you. I had some time ago written a letter for you in answer to your last favor & kept it to go by this Gentleman, whose detention has been so long as to render a new letter more fit. I have now the honor to enclose you the Ordinance above alluded to, which meets the assent of nine States & every member of these Nine States, except one Man, who keeps the Ordinance from passing by the joint causes, as he alleges, of indisposition & dislike. I incline to think,

<sup>1</sup> From the text of an extract from an A. L. S. of Lee, printed in an auctioneer's catalogue. Presented through the courtesy of Professor George Petrie. Fitzgerald was a barrister in Alexandria, Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVII. 242.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

however, that it will pass in the form you now receive it, with very little alteration, if any. I think there is no doubt of the agreement having been made for a change of dominions between the Elector of Bavaria & the Emperor as mentioned in my last, yet, altho we have letters from Ministers in Europe of the 9<sup>th</sup> of february, we are yet in the dark upon the question whether there will be war between the Emperor & the Dutch, or whether it will settle finally between the former & the King of Prussia. The public papers, as you will see by the inclosed, make War very certain. I had lately the honor of writing to you by M<sup>r</sup> Graham, & his Lady M<sup>rs</sup> Macauley Graham the celebrated Historian of England, who go to Virginia, I believe solely to pay their respects to you. I beg leave to refer you to M<sup>r</sup> Sitgreaves for our foreign and domestic news, which indeed is not much.

My respects if you please to your Lady, whose health I hope is perfectly restored — I am, with the truest respect, esteem, and regard, dear Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO [DOCTOR WILLIAM SHIPPEN, JR.]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May 8<sup>th</sup> 1785

MY DEAR SIR,

I had lately the honor of writing to you for the purpose of introducing to your acquaintance & polite attention, the celebrated historian of England M<sup>rs</sup> Macaulay, now M<sup>rs</sup> Graham; who with her husband, is going to visit General Washington. In a late letter that I received from Col<sup>o</sup> Henry Lee, heretofore of the Light Dragoons, he writes as follows.

“M<sup>r</sup> Hall, in payment of money due me, offer’d

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

his claim on Doct<sup>r</sup> Shippen for the negro Cyrus — I saw the Doctor when last at Philadelphia & mentioned Halls claim, and the power I had to settle the matter with him. He agreed to pay £70. the ensuing August — I left an order accordingly, & yesterday had advice of its dishonor, tho I accompanied my order with M<sup>r</sup> Halls receipt in full —

Will you adjust this matter for me — I would not in your present station, ask a moments attention were not my circumstances so streightened, as to demand very pointed attention to matters of money” Thus far the Colonel — And I cannot add to its strength, so have only to assure you that I am always ready to receive and convey your commands to him. The old Lady Livingston & the family wait only for a fair wind to go up the North river to their summer country residence — And I think that I discern some disquietude about the Child not having been here in season to go up with the family — a disquietude however that arises from a tender wish to have dear little Peggy along with them — Since beginning this letter, I have seen the good old Lady, and she mentioned to me that she had sent to her daughter in Law, that she imagined the Child w<sup>d</sup> come forward with M<sup>rs</sup> Tillotson who is expected shortly to pass thro Phil<sup>a</sup> from Baltimore to the Manor. If I am not mistaken, my Nephew the young Lawyer is indebted to me one letter at the least, which I hope to receive when business & Gallantry permit — My Secretary tells me that he hopes for a good Upper Servant for our household, thro the goodness of my Nephew & your Son — What says he to this —

God bless you and all of you is the sincere wish of your affectionate brother.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May 16<sup>th</sup> 1785

SIR,

I thank you for your obliging congratulation on my appointment to the Chair of Congress, and I do with particular pleasure return my congratulation on your sole appointment as Minister of the United States to so eminently respectable a Court as that of his most Christian Majesty — My ill state of health, added to the business and the ceremonies of my Office, has hitherto prevented me from paying my respects to you, which certainly would have been the case if the former of these circumstances had not principally prevented me — Altho' my health is now better, yet I am very far from being well. I can judge how anxious you must be for minute information of public proceedings in the United States, and of such other matters as your letter imports a desire to be acquainted with — But unfortunately all letters are inspected, and thus the impertinent eye of curiosity may be gratified with such communications as were intended only for you, and which wicked selfishness may make a bad use of — This imposes great restraint, which will remain until Congress shall establish a system of Packets and Couriers of their own. How detestable is this dishonorable mode of obtaining intelligence — the virtue of Lord Falkland, when Secretary of State, would never suffer him to obtain information by such nefarious means — The appointment of M<sup>r</sup> Adams to the Court of London will probably draw out quickly

<sup>1</sup> L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 6, Vol. 2, No. 1. A text with variations and omissions is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 64. The postscript is entirely in Lee's handwriting and is signed by him "R. H. L."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the sense of Great Britain upon the points in dispute with them — And the Authority given by Congress to treat with the Piratical States will, I hope, accommodate all differences with them, and give future security to our Commerce with the South of Europe — I am much obliged to you for the pamphlet — I think it is greatly to be regretted, that the avaricious, monopolizing Spirit of Commerce and Commercial men, should be suffered to interrupt that diffusion of benefits, and communication between the human species in different parts of the world, which would probably take place if trade were put upon more liberal principles and less shackled than it is — The first attempt made by these States for the trade of the East Indies was from this City — A Ship has gone to, and returned from Canton in fourteen months with a valuable Cargo, and met with the most friendly treatment from the Chinese — Other Vessels are gone and soon expected back — The great Object with the United States now, is to dispose speedily of the western lands for the discharge of public debt, and a way for this is opened by treaties already made, and making with the Indians — Coinage, requisition, and Post Office are also objects of great moment and subjects of discussion — effectual measures are taking by the Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland — and by the former alone, for opening the navigation between the Potomac and James Rivers with the western waters — Laws with suspending clauses have passed in Virginia for establishing a single Port on each river and for circuit Courts — a general assessment for religion is also a subject of much discussion with us — M<sup>r</sup> Patrick Henry is our Governor, and Col. Harrison has lost his Election in his own County of James City — Great and general efforts have been made to get into the Legislature during the late Elections and I hear that there are many changes — It

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

remains uncertain whether Congress will adjourn or not this year — but as I value extremely your Correspondence, Your letters for me may always be safely enclosed to the Virginia Delegates in Congress, so that whether Congress or the Committee of States should be sitting, your letters will reach me safely — be so good as to thank M<sup>r</sup> Short for his letter to me, and inform him that I will reply by the next Packet — I heartily wish you hea[l]th and ha[p]piness and I am with the truest esteem and regard

Sir,

Your Most Obedient and very humble  
Servant.

P.S.

I know that your goodness will excuse my having used an amanuensis, when you know that this cold climate has so afflicted my hand & head as to make writing painful

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS?]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May 20. 1785

MY DEAR SIR,

I thank you for your favor introducing M<sup>rs</sup> Macauley Graham to me. This excellent Lady made but a short stay here, being desirous of returning from the South, before the sickly season comes on in that climate. I hope we shall shortly finish our plan for disposing of the western Lands to discharge the oppressive public debt created by the war & I think that if this source of revenue be rightly managed, that these republics may soon be discharged from that state of oppression and distress that an indebted people must

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Bancroft Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

invariably feel. The late arrival here of a Ship from Canton in China after a successful voyage of 14 Months from this port, is a proof of American enterprise, and will probably mortify, as much as it will injure our old oppressors, the British.

I beg my respects to M<sup>rs</sup> Adams, and I sincerely wish a long continuance of health and happiness to you, being most truly dear Sir your affectionate friend.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May the 22<sup>d</sup> 1785

MY DEAR NEPHEW.

I thank you much for your letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> instant, which I received this day — M<sup>r</sup> Wilson did not deliver me your letter himself, but it did come to my hands altho' I knew not who brought it, as I found the letter with many others upon my table some days after M<sup>r</sup> Wilson's arrival in Town. Either you or myself must have totally forgotten the contents of that letter — Having written thus far, I stopt to search for the above letter, having totally forgotten that you had mention'd the Sword in it — And now I must ask yours and the Workmans pardon for my neglect in not having long since sent the money — But it shall surely come by the first good opportunity. If the Gunsmith will make me a good neat Stock for my Gun with a new Rod & screw at the end of it, I will give him an half Johannes. But you know that he was to prevent one of the cocks from falling at half bent as well as to clean the Gun. I am greatly obliged by your attention to my commissions. I hope that the Iron from M<sup>r</sup> Prager, with the Charriot Skins will be sent in the vessel you mention. You will please write a short letter to M<sup>rs</sup> Lee with the

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Goods and inclose it to the person either on Rappahanock or Potomac with whom the goods are to be left, desiring him to convey your letter to Chantilly that M<sup>rs</sup> Lee may take measures to get them brot home. The length of the shoes that M<sup>r</sup> Starr made for me in October last will do well for the Gouty Shoes as to length, but they must be something wider for the Gout which increases the bulk but not the length of the foot. The Soles may be of thick but soft leather and well rasped — The heels not high — The Toes round not sharp, and the upper leather of good sound Buckskin stained black & lined with the fur you have procured. You have very properly directed about the Cypher on my Sulky, which I am glad to hear is so well finished. I have desired M<sup>r</sup> Harrison to search for M<sup>r</sup> Burnley who you may be assured shall meet with every civility from me as your friend, as Ludwells, and as an able worthy man.

I believe it is only for that eye which sees all things to come, that can conjecture when Congress will adjourn. It seems clear however that it will not be before August, if they adjourn at all — whilst they continue to sit I am bound you know — & when they adjourn I shall make great haste to Virginia — However, I hope you may go up the North River, because, by that means I shall have the happiness of seeing you here once more before I quit this City. We have past the Land Ordinance for selling the Country N. W. of Ohio so far as the Indian purchases go, for payment of the debts of the United States — No news here, for it is not new that I love you all very sincerely

God bless you, farewell.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May the 28th 1785

DEAR SIR.

I had the honor of writing to you by Col- Smith, which letter I doubt not but that you have, or will in due time safely receive. My hopes are great, that your wisdom, and the good sense of the British Administration, will extinguish the mischievous discord that has been so artfully and industriously fomented by the enemies of both countries to the essential injury of both, and in violation of the best principles of humanity. A set of acrimonious, disappointed people, who meaning the gratification of their own malice and self interest, are poisoning the minds of men with plausibilities and theoretic reasonings, that are opposed to the true state of things; and whose counsels if pursued, will tend only to plant dissention and distress, where mutual good and common happiness should be cultivated, and will flourish. The enclosed ordinance will show you the measures that we are taking to dispose of western lands for the extinguishment of the public debt. It seems that this will have very powerful operation in effecting the end designed by the system. For the country is fine beyond description both in soil and climate—abounding with all those primary and essential materials for human industry to work upon, in order to produce the comfort and happiness of mankind. Don Diego de Gardoque has just announced to me his arrival at Philadelphia in quality of Plenipotentiary from his Catholic Majesty, & that he will pay his respects in a few days. The enterprise of America is well marked by the successful voyage made by a ship from this port, that had

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original furnished through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

returned after a voyage of 14 months from Canton in China with a valuable Eastern cargo. Our people met with great civility from the Chinese, and the Europeans at Canton, altho' civil to the Stripes, were not a little surprised to see them there so soon, and at the celerity with which their voyages were effected. The gentleman who writes the letter of which the enclosed is a copy, is a near relation of mine by marriage, and my Godson also. Added to this, I am his friend because of his worth and deserts. He is the youngest but one of a numerous family — Possessing talents, industry, and enterprise, he determined very early to shake off that indolence too common with youths of his rank in Virginia — In quest of fortune, after having finished his education he went 15 years ago to Sea, and pursued his system to the East Indies some years before the late war commenced, and he remained in the East engaged with the country trade there. His letter will inform you of his misfortunes, of his present situation, and his future views. My acquaintance has ceased with all who might have promoted his interest in the East Indies. Under these circumstances I venture to beg the favor of you to assist him to the utmost of your power in the way of procuring for him the appointment that he desires in the Company's service. I know that it has not been uncommon in England for foreign Ministers to interest themselves in favor of Individuals, by which means the latter have become essentially served. I am sure that in this case you will oblige a worthy able man, and a greatful mind. That your friend the writer of this letter, requests this favor of you, will I am very sure, be a motive of strong inducement with you to exert yourself. The letter that I have enclosed for him under your cover be so kind as to get forwarded by some of the India Ships bound to, or near to Calcutta.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

It may go with any letter in his favor that you are so good as to procure for him. It seems probable at present that Congress will not adjourn this year — if they should it will not be sooner than the middle of August, — Your letters for me will be in a good way when they are delivered to the care of Messrs Wallace, Johnson & Muir Merchants in London. I heartily wish you health and happiness

Your affectionate friend.

TO [JAMES MADISON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May 30<sup>th</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR,

Two days ago, and not sooner, your favor of March the 20<sup>th</sup> was delivered to me, so that you find it has been more than two months travelling thus far. It seems to me that our assembly were influenced more by the letter than the spirit of the Confederation — The consequence will certainly be, if our meetings are slow as usual, that Virginia will be unrepresented for some time after the federal year commences. Tho no great mischief arises from this, the appearance is not so handsome as it should be; besides that it partakes too much of that too common inattention to the great Council of the U.S. upon the wise conduct of which so much depends.

I am very happy to see by the Newspapers that the business of opening Potomac goes on so well. 'Tis certainly an object of great consequence to extend our internal navigation — Concerning James river I have heard nothing — When I was in our Assembly it appeared to me rather to be the wish, than otherwise,

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Library of Congress, Madison Papers, XIV. 20. This was probably signed by Lee in autograph as the signature is cut out of the manuscript.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that Kentucky should apply for separation — and I should suppose that if when they found themselves compitent to the business of Self Government they properly applied to our Assembly, no good objection could be made to a separation — For they have, & will remain for a long time, if not always, more expense than profit to the rest of the country. Washington county seems to be stimulated by a troublesome person who for self aggrandisement appears will<sup>g</sup> to dismember that part also, & join with the revolvers from N. Carolina — This last seems to merit the *wise & firm* attention of Government & the Legislature — We have, after much debate indeed, & great waste of time, at last passed an Ordinance for disposing of such part of the lands N. W of the Ohio as belongs to the U. S. & have been purchased of the Indians. If this proves agreeable to the public, it will extinguish about 10 millions of the pub debt, and the remaining lands, going southward to the Mississippi, will nearly discharge all the debt — Besides the probable prospect that we have of considerable cessions from N & S. Carolina & Georgia — This source does indeed deserve our warmest cultivation as it seems to be almost the only one that we have for discharging our oppressive debt. D<sup>r</sup> Franklin has leave to retire M<sup>r</sup> Jefferson remains in France — and M<sup>r</sup> J. Adams is sent to London. If the Court of this last country is sincere, we may expect an amicable & easy settlement of existing differences between us — The Minister (M<sup>r</sup> Pitt) does appear willing to be liberal in Commercial regulations, but the avaricious spirit of Commerce that is so great everywhere, but which in England has ever been excessive, opposes his views — And so we find it is in France, for the Marquis de la Fayette writes that the advantages already granted us are most violently exclaimed against by the Trading people of the Kingdom.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

M<sup>r</sup> Gardoque who calls himself *Plenepotentiary charged with affairs* is arrived at Phil<sup>a</sup> and we expect him soon here — So that we shall quickly know whether he can or will do any thing conclusive concerning the Navigation of Mississippi — He reports a great scarcity of provisions at the Havannah, — but yet we don't hear of the Ports of that Island being opened to us for supply — It is reported that the frigate which brought him is taking in flower — The American enterprise has been well markt by a short and successful Voyage made from hence to Canton in China — The Chinese were kind to our people and glad to see a new source of Commerce opened to them from a *New People*, as they called us — The Europeans there were civil but astonished at the rapidity of our movements, especially the English — I fear that our Countrymen will overdo this business — For now there appears every where a Rage for East India Voyages, so that the variety of means may defeat the attainment of the concurrent end — A regulated & useful commerce with that part of the World — It seems very questionable now whether Congress will adjourn or not this year — if they do, it will not be until late in August — Inattention, sickness, and a variety of causes occasion business to go on very slowly. J.

TO [JOHN ADAMS] <sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May 31st 1785.

DEAR SIR.

On the 28th instant I had the honor to pay my respects to you in a letter of that date to which I beg to refer. The design of this letter is to introduce to your acquaintance and friendly offices Captain Christopher

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original supplied through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Miller, the Bearer, who was this day introduced to me by Governor Clinton of this State, who assures me that in the late war the Captain proved himself to be a firm and useful friend to the cause of America. And the Governor added, that he would be answerable for Captain Miller's worth and integrity. The Captain has in contemplation a plan, concerning which he will talk with you, and which he thinks will be productive both of private & public good; and if you can find it convenient to aid his views, I doubt not but you will assist a worthy friend to this country—I have the honor to be with the most perfect esteem and regard dear Sir your most obedient, & very  
humble Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN] <sup>1</sup>

N. YORK June the 4<sup>th</sup> 1785

MY DEAR NEPHEW —

Both M<sup>r</sup> Hadfield & M<sup>r</sup> Burnley have been with me, tho not so often as I wished them to be—however, I suppose that they are satisfied with my attention to them. You will no doubt be surprised that I have not yet sent the dollars for the Sword Cutler—I will tell you why I have not—Two bills sent me from Virg<sup>a</sup> have been lying for some time under acceptance but not yet paid—In a few days one of them will, & the first opportunity after, the money shall be sent—I must be governed by your judgement concerning the getting of my Chair sent here by Water—Two things are in this affair to be attended to—That the expence be light, and that the Carriage, Trunk, Box & Harness, be not rubbed or damaged by the Voyage—For these purposes a Careful & Reasonable

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Captain is to be sought for, and as the case is not Urgent, there being two months at least for the purpose, the chance for finding such a concurrence may be a good one—You know that if it comes not by Water, I must be at the expence of sending for it by Land—And as the opportunities by water are frequent & this Season of the year favorable, it appears most Eligible to fix on the water conveyance—If so, the Key of the Trunk may be lockt up in the Box & the Key of the latter enclosed to me in a letter.

I thank your worthy father for the Servant sent. He has just arrived, and I hope will answer the purpose.

The Black fish, Sheepshead, & Sea Bass are now numerous & fine. I wish most sincerely that we had our good Brothers—your father—company here to assist in the discussion of some of them—Besides, the Champaign, Claret, Madiera & Muscat are good—I know that your philosophy is above temptation—Yet I cannot help wishing now that the inducements might so far prevail as to give us the pleasure of your company a while—It will be unfortunate for us if M<sup>r</sup> Gardoque should not be a Smoker and so not be provided with Havanna Segars The most worthy Don Juan Miralles used to supply us so copiously that he has occasioned us to loose all appetite for other smoking—Write to me about my Chair, and by all means about the family—how you all do—& how is my much esteemed friend the old Doctor.

God bless you, farewell.

His most Ch<sup>n</sup> Majesty has just announced to Congress the birth of another Son called Duke of Normandy.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, JUNE 11th, 1785.

MY DEAR SIR —

I have been lately honoured with your letter of March 16th, from Paris, and I thank you for it ; as I feel myself much interested in your happiness, so your letter gave me singular pleasure, when it informed me of your “ being well and happy, with your family and friends,” and the more so, because a rumor had prevailed, of some accident having happened at sea, to the frigate that carried you from hence. It is with great satisfaction, that I consider any action of my life, that has proved agreeable to you, and I am very sure, that the good you have done for my country, has much more than repaid my attentions to you. I am pleased that you think of coming to see us again ; it is certain, that numbers will be made happy here, when ever you are pleased to visit these United States. Much praise is due to those, by whose humanity, and powerful agency, a war in Europe has been prevented, for had it taken place, I apprehend that the evil would have been great and very extensive. It is unfortunate for the friendly intercourse, and general benefit of mankind, that the avaricious spirit of commerce, always aiming at monopoly, should be permitted to interpose such obstructions as too frequently take place in the intercourse of nations, much to the injury of human nature, in general. It seems to me, that whilst the European nations have it in their power, to supply these states so largely with manufactures, that it is unwise to adopt such regulations as cramp the American trade, and thereby render us incapable of purchasing, and paying for, those manufactures in so extensive a manner, as would certainly be done, if commercial re-

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 66.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

straints were removed ; this conduct on the part of Europe tends to injure their manufactures, by lessening their sales, at the same time, that it very much forces the Americans from agriculture to arts, thus rendering scarcer and dearer, the American productions that are wanted in Europe, and lessening the use of European manufactures in America, which it should be the policy of Europe to encourage the use of. It is very obvious, why the merchants of France, have not so great a share of our commerce as they wish ; the staple states, or those which have much valuable produce to export, have at present but few ships and seamen of their own, and consequently, do not now export themselves much of their own produce ; those nations, therefore, that push the trade with them, by sending ships and merchandise to them, will for the reason above, certainly possess at this time, the greatest share of their trade ; so that the fact is, that the British merchants, are those chiefly, who bring us the cambricks and many other manufactures of France, which the French merchants failed to export themselves, although they might afford to sell them cheaper and better, than the English, and of course drive the latter from this branch of trade at least. The plan for opening the navigation of the western waters, goes on well — already more than 40,000 pounds are subscribed for opening the Potomac, and General Washington, is chosen president of the society, that superintends that business. The settling a mode for surveying and selling the fine country, north-west of Ohio river, for the purpose of discharging our public debt, is an object that hath engaged much attention of Congress, and promises, we think, in due season, to remove the debts created by the last war. Mr. Gardoque, from Spain, is arrived at Philadelphia, and we daily expect him in this city ; it is to be hoped, that the good sense and honour of his court,

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD] HENRY LEE

will finally settle into such measures, as are just and reasonable. I have the honour to be, my dear sir, with sentiments of the truest affection, esteem and regard,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

Marquis DE LA FAYETTE, at Paris.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June 13. 1785

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

Your favor of June the 11<sup>th</sup> has been just now put into my hands, and had it come sooner would have rendered unnecessary some parts of my letter to you of yesterday, which, with this will be delivered by M<sup>r</sup>. Joseph Harrison. I am very sure that without incurring the smallest danger of being charged with self applause, I can safely appeal to all those acquainted with my political progress, for a full testimonial that neither indolence, inattention or *neglect* have marked my proceedings — And most certainly I should not have first commenced such practice with so respectable a character as Doctor Franklin. When Congress determined to indulge the Doctor, upon his request, with leave to retire, the business of communicating that determination was expressly assigned to the Secretary for foreign affairs among the other duties of his Office — And did not enter at all into my business — In me it would have been a work of supererogation and I think myself warranted in doing justice to the honorable Secretary for foreign Affairs by assuring you that his information was sent by the earliest good opportunity that offered after the Act of Congress passed. I thank you for your obliging attention to my affairs — but

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

you say nothing about the covering for my Charriot—is it gone, or in what State is that affair—The Gout Shoes are come & I believe will answer well—God bless you—

farewell.

TO [WILLIAM SHORT]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, June the 13<sup>th</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR,

I am much obliged by the goodness with which you have been pleased to remember, and to comply with my request that you would write to me, and I am thereby encouraged to hope that your correspondence will be continued—It may always be safely conveyed, even when I am away from Congress, by enclosing your letter to the Virginia delegates in Congress. It is a point of much uncertainty whether Congress will adjourn or not this summer—but if they do, it will probably not be before the middle of August. When they adjourn I shall go home, but if they do not adjourn, I shall of course be detained here until the end of the federal year, the first monday in November.

The very great uncertainty to which the conveyance of letters is exposed under the present System, discourages exceedingly all free communication of sentiments. And upon this occasion, as M<sup>r</sup> Mazzie will probably visit you at Paris, he will render unnecessary much writing on my part respecting Virginia, as he has come from that State long since I left it. The princi-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, II. 68. Endorsed, “Given to me by Mr. Short to whom it is addressed in 1834. R. Gilmore.” Short was Jefferson’s secretary of legation at Paris.



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pal topics of discussion there at present are, An Act for a General Assessment,—A Circuit Court Law—And a plan for opening the interior navigation of Potomac, James, & Elizabeth rivers—The two former were favored by the last Assembly but meet with much opposition since the Recess—The latter of these measures was also a favorite with the last Assembly, and the Legislature of Maryland has joined ours in the Potomac business—How they succeed in the South I know not—But already £40,000 has been subscribed for clearing Potomac—A Corporation for the purpose is legitimated, and Gen. Washington is President of the Society—You well know his persevering spirit, and attentive character—These qualities promise success to the Potomac plan—Congress has just finished an Ordinance for surveying & selling that part of the Land N. W. of Ohio that has been lately purchased of the Indians, for the purpose of discharging our public debts—This will present about 10 Millions of Acres for sale at one dollar an Acre of Liquidated Certificate debt—Subsequent treaties to be held with the Indians will extinguish their claim to about 20 millions more which it is intended to devote to the same purpose, & which will very nearly pay off our whole domestic debt—The foreign will then not be found oppressive—An American Coinage, & the regulation of the Post Office, with some other affairs of importance are now under consideration of Congress—We hope that the powers & directions given by Congress to our Ministers abroad, will secure peace for us with the Barbary States and free our Trade from the embarrassment threatened by them—I incline to think however, that Commercial finesse has been more operative than the enmity of those people to distress the American Commerce

Being much engaged with public business at this

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

time, I must conclude with presenting my best respects to my old friend M<sup>r</sup> Jefferson —

I am with very much esteem, Sir

Your most obedient & very  
humble Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June 20. 1785

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

If you should not have shipped my Chair for this place before you receive this letter I beg you not to remove it from Philadelphia until you hear further from me — My former illness has returned upon me with such increased violence, that unless a change soon takes place I must either quit this City & business for change of air and quiet, or else certainly deposit my remains here. My love to all with you & to yourself sincerely.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>2</sup>

NEW YORK June 22<sup>d</sup> 1785

MY DEAR NEPHEW.

When I wrote you last monday, I had been under so severe an affliction by the Gouty matter attacking my Bowels for some days, that I was quickly reduced very low — So that if a change had not taken place, the consequences would certainly have been very bad — I am happy however now to inform you that a change has taken place so much for the better as to render it not necessary for you to postpone the sending of my Chair here to me by water — I have only to observe

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

that the sooner you can properly do this, consistently with my former observations on the subject, it will be the better — Give my love to y<sup>r</sup> worthy father & tell him that it was forgetfulness altogether that occasioned me to omit returning by M<sup>r</sup> Harrison the Money that he was so kind as to advance to the Servant, but it shall be done by the next opportunity.

Remember me most affectionately to all the family  
farewell.

P. S.

Since my former letter in answer to your last I have spoken with M<sup>r</sup> Secretary Jay and he assures me that he sent by the first Packet that sailed after the Act of Congress passed a Notification to D<sup>r</sup> Franklin that he had leave to retire — How causeless then, & how improper was a censure placed on me in whose department it was not, and when he in whose line it was, had actually done it?! —

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [THE] SECRETARY [OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

[JOHN] JAY

PRESIDENTS HOUSE 19<sup>th</sup> July 1785.

SIR,

The letter from his most christian Majesty mentioned in yours of the 18<sup>th</sup> instant is to be received in the same manner as the late letter from his Majesty was — And I have the honor now to inform you that I shall be ready to receive M<sup>r</sup> De Marbois here tomorrow forenoon at half an hour after ten oclock.

I am, with much esteem and regard Sir your most obedient and very humble servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of the Department of State, Unbound Ms. Addressed, “Honorable/M<sup>r</sup> Secretary Jay//R. H. Lee.”

THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO THE MAYOR  
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

[JAMES DUANE]

July 20<sup>th</sup> 1785

The Honorable

James Duane Esq<sup>r</sup>

Mayor of the City of N. York

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose an Act of Congress, that has been prompted by the daily interruption given to their discussions by the almost unceasing noise of passing Carriages — Your long acquaintance with public business, and your wish to see it discharged with propriety and dispatch, will secure your approbation of the proposed remedy if it Shall be found to consist with the police of the City

I have the honor to be with  
Sentiments of esteem and regard

Sir,

Your most Obedient & very  
humble Servant.

THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO [GENERAL  
GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>2</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

DEAR SIR,

NEW YORK July the 23<sup>d</sup> 1785

I lately had the honor of forwarding a packet for you by Post that came enclosed to me from France,

<sup>1</sup> Letter book transcript. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 322.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVIII. 92. A transcript with slight variations is in Harvard University Library, Sparks Mss., LXVI. ii. 103.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

by the author of a Dramatic piece on the former situation of Capt. Asgil. The subject is not a bad one, but the Author of this work seems not to have made the most of it.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May M<sup>r</sup> Du Mas writes us, that the parties still continue to negotiate the peace *in a very threatening manner* — In truth, this whole affair is involved in much mystery, and perhaps the truth is only known in the interior cabinets of the greatest powers. The Marquiss de la Fayette, in a late letter seems to think that the collected combustibles may be put in flame by various accidents. The Emperor he says is restless, the Empress of Russia ambitious, the King of Prussia old, with other combining causes renders the peace of Europe precarious — The Marquiss proposes to visit this summer the Manoeuvring Troops of Austria & Prussia in the North of Europe. We have lately received a letter from his most Ch<sup>r</sup> Majesty, in answer to one from Congress to him recommending the Marquiss, in which his Majesty is pleased to express himself in such a manner of the Marquis as promises well for the future promotion of that Nobleman. —

Mr. Adams writes that he has been received in due form at the Court of London, has had his audience, and delivered his Credentials to that Sovereign — No treaty when he wrote had been commenced, but we expect soon to hear of the commencement & progress of that business. M<sup>r</sup> Jay is commissioned by Congress to open negotiations with M<sup>r</sup> Gardoque the Spanish Plenepo here, concerning the navigation of Mississippi, Boundary, Commerce &c. The Spanish Minister appears to be well disposed towards us. It gives me singular pleasure to hear that the plan for opening the navigation of Potomac goes on successfully, as it promises such capital benefits to our coun-



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

try. It is some time since I wrote to Col<sup>o</sup> Fitzgerald desiring that he would put me down for a share.

Is it possible that a plan can be formed for issuing a large sum of paper money by the next Assembly? I do verily believe that the greatest foes we have in the world could not devise a more effectual plan for ruining Virginia. I should suppose that every friend to his country, every honest and sober Man would join heartily to reprobate so nefarious a plan of speculation.

Be pleased Sir to present my best respects to your Lady and be assured that I am, with sentiments of the greatest respect, esteem, & regard; dear Sir your most affectionate and obedient Servant.

P.S.

Altho I began this letter on the 23<sup>d</sup> my ill state of health and much business have prevented me from finishing it until this day the 31<sup>st</sup> of July—I thank God that my health is now much better than it has been

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK August the 1st 1785.

MY DEAR SIR.

I received your letter by your Son with the pleasure that will always attend such communications from an old and much valued friend. But on this occasion I have been the more happy as it furnished me the opportunity of showing civilities to the Son of my friend—I have had as much of his company as our mutual affairs would permit because I have had the satisfaction to

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original supplied through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams. John Adams's reply, September 6, 1785, is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 143.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

lodge him in my House. Your plan for his education I cannot but approve, since it is the very one that I had chosen for my own Son. It may be admitted as a truth little to be doubted that Merchants are generally keen to discern and ready to pursue their true interests. This perhaps may be as good a rule as any by which to judge of the propriety of giving time for payment of the debts due from the U. S. to G. B. previous to the War. Now it is certain that the most knowing Merchants, Creditors upon that ground here, have expressed the greatest willingness to consent to receive payment by regular installments, allowing reasonable time between — the reverse of this, & a vigorous demand of payment as quickly as law pursuits would enable them to recover, they are well aware would be much less conducive to their interest than the first method that I have stated — And this seems to be the plan generally agreed upon, by installments I mean — Permit me Sir to animadvert a little upon the strange objection taken up in G. Britain by some ill informed writers, whose mistakes seem to have affected even Government itself. It is that Congress have not power to make effecient Treaties of Commerce. You know Sir, that the Confederation has obtained the solemn legal sanction of every Legislature in the U. States; and is therefore a compact as binding as can exist among Men — What then does the Confederation say? By the 9th Article Congress have a clear right to make whatever Treaties of Commerce they shall judge proper, subject to only two limitations. One, that foreigners may be compelled to pay as high duties & imports as the people of any State pay — The 2nd that any State may in Toto prohibit the export or import of any particular species of Goods. With respect to the first limitation is it not one that all States upon earth ought to possess & do actually (I believe exercise) And can a British Minister

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

be serious in refusing to make a Commercial Treaty with Congress because they have not power to permit the Subjects of G. B. to trade with the U. S. under less oppressions than the Citizens of the States pay? Or can it be supposed that if Congress possessed this power that so unequal a system would ever be agreed upon by Congress? It is not a supposable case, & therefore this limitation can be no just or true ground of objection — The second & only remaining one, seems to have as little force, because a State must be evidently insane that will in toto prohibit any species of export or import unless its very existence depends upon such prohibition — And in that case the power and the exercise of it is indispensable, and reaching to Self preservation must forever & will forever be exercised — T'is evident that the interest of the States will effectually prevent any such total prohibition unless in the extremity above stated. And interest is the surest principle for judging how Mén & States will act. Now then I say again, that these two limitations excepted (which for the reasons already assigned are no objections to the making a Treaty of Commerce with Congress for want of power) Congress have a clear & unquestioned right to make any treaty they choose — And it is remarkable that except some factious writers in G. Britain, the objection exists not — You know that very discerning Nations have treated with us under perfect knowledge of our Confederation; without producing any objection of this kind — When the people here are informed of such an objection from G. Britain they conclude universally that the objection is too feeble to be real, & that the true cause is something else — That something they are not at a loss to discover, and therefore the general outcry now is, let such regulations be instituted as will put the Trade of G. B. with us under such restraints as may

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satisfy them that they are mistaken in the supposition that their share of our Commerce will be large as they please, & therefore that no Treaty is necessary. Let us give decided preferences to the Ships not only of our own country, but to those of the Nations with whom we have Commercial Treaties. It is very evident that these measures will take effect if Britain does not soon depart from her present system and take up one more liberal — To be sure, the consequence least prejudicial to them, but which is yet very important, must inevitably take place under their present plan — to wit, a very contracted use of British Manufactures, because their regulations prevent the means of paying for them, & of course will greatly limit the use & the purchase of them —

I lately wrote to you concerning my friend Mr Thomas Steptoe in India. have you received my letters, and have you had it in your power to do anything for him? I wish much to know. Congress have taken measures for exposing to sale several millions of Acres in the N. W. side of the river Ohio, a part of the late cession from Virginia, for the purpose of paying off a considerable part of our domestic debt — The soil and climate of that country is incomparably fine, and I have no doubt will be greedily purchased with the public securities — If this plan succeeds, our debt will soon be removed. Be so kind as present my respectful compliments to Dr Price, and tell him that I received his packet of pamphlets and distributed them among the Members of Congress who received them very thankfully and with the respect due to so great & able a defender of the liberties of Mankind, and the rights of human nature —

I shall always be happy to hear from you, and am, with the highest esteem and affectionate regard Yours.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [JAMES MADISON]<sup>1</sup>

N. Y. Aug. 11, 1785

DEAR SIR,

Your favor of July the 7<sup>th</sup> was long coming to hand as I find my letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> May was in getting to you — This joined to the uncertainty of letters ever arriving safe is a very discouraging circumstance to full and free correspondence — I have the honor of according most perfectly and entirely with your ideas for regulating our severance from Kentucky. It is unquestionably just that this district should assume her fair and full proportion of the debt created by the war because the benefit being common so should be the expense procuring it and that this country shall be a fundamental article in the Act of parting; as well as that they shall be a component part of the Federal Union — The contract should be Tripartite; the parties, our state, Congress, & Kentucky — Mr Jay is commissioned to treat with Mr Gardoqui, but as yet nothing has been done — The exclusive nav<sup>n</sup> of Mississippi will be earnestly contended for by Spain, who to quiet us on that head will probably grant large commercial benefits — But if we remain firm, I incline to think that the Navign will be consented to — As yet we only know officially that Mr Adams has arrived in London, received his Audience and delivered his Credentials — The next packet will probably inform us of his feeling the B. pulse & how it<sup>2</sup> beats at the subjects that he is to try them upon — I think with you that there is not great room for hope of Commercial

<sup>1</sup> A? dr. L. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 400. A transcript with variations is in the Virginia Historical Society and from this a text is printed in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, May, 1860, p. 348. Madison's letter to which this is an answer is printed *ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for "the British pulse" erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

advantages from a Nation whose appetite for Commerce has ever been ravenous, and its wishes always for Monopoly — And the more especially as we have no compensation to make — I believe that we may dispose them to be reasonable, by a very careful, and considerate restraining of their Trade, in all cases where we shall not injure ourselves more than them by the restraint.<sup>1</sup> — It seems to me clear, beyond doubt, that the giving Congress a power to Legislate over the Trade of the Union would be dangerous in the extreme to the 5 Southern or Staple States, whose want of Ships & Seamen would expose their freightage & their produce to a most pernicious and destructive Monopoly — With such a power 8 states in the Union would be stimulated by extensive interest to shut close the door of Monopoly, that by the exclusion of all rivals whether for the purchasing of our produce or freighting it, both these might be at the Mercy of our East and North — <sup>2</sup> The Spirit of Commerce through out the world is a spirit of Avarice and could not fail to act as above stated — What little difficulty there would be in drawing over one of the 5 to join the 8 interested States would be very discernible to those who have marked the progress of intrigues in Congress. In truth it demands most careful circumspection that the remedy be not worse than the disease, bad as the last may be — I could say much on this subject, but it is not necessary, for I am sure that your good sense reflecting calmly on this subject will sufficiently discern the danger of such an experiment — Nor do I believe it necessary, being perfectly satisfied that a well digested system of restraint being properly laid before the States by Congress would be <sup>3</sup> unanimously adopted by the different

<sup>1</sup> The words “ I believe ” are here erased.

<sup>2</sup> The words “ what little ” are here erased.

<sup>3</sup> Substituted for “ with ” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Assemblies — I think so, because it will be most evidently the interest of all to do so — It is true that the price of our Staple has been for some time greater at Phila: and here than in Virga — But it is as true that the European price did not warrant the price at these two places as the great losses and bankruptcies of the Adventurers plainly prove — Indeed this excess of price at P. & N. Y. was occasioned by sinking speculators, who to swim awhile longer, would go any length to keep up appearances, by making some remittance to their Creditors abroad — But this business is now chiefly over & here at present there is neither money nor inclination to purchase Tob<sup>o</sup> — The crowd of bankrupts at P. has, I believe, nearly produced the same effect.

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO THE SECRETARY  
OF CONGRESS<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

[CHARLES THOMSON]

NEW YORK August, 16, 1785,

SIR,

If, during the time of my absence, any business occurs that requires my signature; be pleased to transmit such to me at Doct<sup>r</sup> Shippens in Philadelphia from whence you will receive a speedy return. I have the honor to be, with much esteem & regard, Sir your most obedient and very humble servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, L. 78, Vol. 14, p. 661.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [THE SECRETARY  
OF CONGRESS]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

[CHARLES THOMSON]

PHILADELPHIA August 21<sup>st</sup> 1785.

SIR,

The letter that you favored me with on the 18<sup>th</sup> instant reached me yesterday after the post had left the City, so that the papers enclosed for my signature must be detained until next post day, unless Doct<sup>r</sup> Gardener should afford me an opportunity of more quickly conveying them — With the returned papers, you will receive also enclosed a letter from the honorable M<sup>r</sup> Rutledge, and one from L<sup>t</sup> Col<sup>o</sup> Harmer, both which I received yesterday. I pray you Sir to accept my thanks for your obliging wishes for the recovery of my health, which is certainly better than when I left New York,

I am, with much esteem, Sir  
your most obedient and very humble servant.

THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO  
[THE SECRETARY] OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS<sup>2</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

JOHN JAY

SIR,

PHILADELPHIA September 11<sup>th</sup> 1785.

I had the honor of receiving this morning your favor of the fourth instant concerning the letter from Count de Florida Blanca to the President of Congress, which was delivered to me by M<sup>r</sup> Gardoque. Hav-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, L. 78, Vol. 14, p. 665.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Library of the Department of State, Unbound Ms. Addressed, "Honorable John Jay esquire / Minister for Foreign Affairs / at / New York // R. H. Lee."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ing considered that letter as a public one, I delivered it to Congress, and it now remains with their Secretary, if he has not sent it to your office. I do not precisely remember the contents of the letter, and viewing it in the light of a public one, I have two difficulties, which I pray your assistance to remove. As a public letter, it would seem that the sentiments in answer should be dictated by Congress — As a private one, I should know exactly its contents which I do not. I shall be very happy to have your sentiments on this occasion after you have seen the letter ; and I will readily pursue that course which your better knowledge of such business shall point out to me.

Be pleased Sir to accept my thanks for your obliging wishes for the restoration of my health which is much mended since I have drank the waters in the vicinity of this place. My compliments, if you please, to M<sup>r</sup> Gardoque.

I have the honor to be, with sentiments of much esteem and regard, Sir your most obedient and very humble servant.

THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO  
[THE PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

COUNT DE FLORIDA BLANCA

SIR,

NEW YORK October the 6, 1785

The letter that your Excellency did me the honor to write to me on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October last,<sup>2</sup> was delivered to

<sup>1</sup> A. copy L. S. American Philosophical Society, Lee Papers, II. 247, No. 68. A letter book transcript of this letter is in the Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, XVI. 322.

<sup>2</sup> This letter, accrediting Gardoquei as “ charged with affairs ” to the United States, is in the American Philosophical Society, Lee Papers, II. 246.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

me by S<sup>r</sup> D<sup>n</sup> Diego de Gardoque immediately on his arrival. Being soon after much indisposed, it became necessary for me to retire from Congress for the recovery of my health, and that circumstance deprived me of the pleasure of writing to your Excellency by a more early conveyance. The appointment of M<sup>r</sup> Gardoque gave great Satisfaction to the United States, and I flatter myself that the manner in which he was received, and will continue to be treated, will be perfectly agreeable to his Catholic Majesty. Be assured Sir that it is the sincere wish of this Country, not only to be on good terms with, but to cultivate the friendship of the Spanish Monarchy; and I am warranted to add, that the United States will cheerfully join in concerting and concluding such friendly and commercial connections with his Majesty, as by properly settling territorial questions, and regulating the intercourse of the two nations on principles of reciprocity, may produce and perpetuate mutual harmony and good will between them. I pray God to bless your Excellency with long life, health, and happiness. With every consideration of high esteem and respect I have the honor to be Sir your Excellencies most obedient & most humble servant.

His Excellency

The Count DE FLORIDA BLANCA.

TO ———

1

NEW YORK October the 10<sup>th</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR.

The public papers will have informed you of my having left New York, and the cause — The benefit that I received from the use of the Chalybeate waters in the vicinity of Philadelphia has been very flattering

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Massachusetts Historical Society, Washburn Mss. 11. 1. 4, p. 18.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

and has enabled me to return to this City with a store of health that I hope will be sufficient at least to carry me triumphantly thro my Presidential year. The circumstance of ill health has been the principal cause that has prevented me from replying sooner to your favor of August the 8<sup>th</sup> last. Indeed the current news here has been too unimportant to trouble you with reading or myself with writing it, & especially as it is well detailed in the newspapers. It is with infinite pleasure I learn that our church convention at Philadelphia have concluded their business with great concord, the surest pledge of the future success of their system. It was a circumstance of much advantage that their council were not disturbed by the mischievous high church principles that prevail with the nonjuring Episcopalians of these Northern regions, who, with Bishop Seabury at their head would have been very sufficient to disturb the Moderate Councils of any Whig assembly in the world.

Our public letters of this day from the officers of the U. States at Pittsburg & its neighborhood, represent the Indian Nations, as Nations, in a friendly point of view, and seem to promise success as well to our treaty at the Mouth of Great Miami this month, as to the progress of business in surveying the Territory appointed for Sale northwest of Ohio. You have been misinformed with respect to the violent proceedings at Boston — Both in that State & N. Hampshire they have indeed passed lately Commercial Acts respecting foreign trade generally that do not accord with our Commercial treaties both with France & Sweden, which have already produced memorials to Congress from the Consuls of these nations — However, as these laws were probably the product of haste & inattention, I have no doubt but that they will rectify the evil upon a proper representation from the federal

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

head — So essential is the difference between the Northern & Southern productions and circumstances relative to Commerce, that it is not easy to adopt any general system that would well accord with all; and the Staple States should be feelingly alive to the proposed plan of vesting powers absolute for the restraint & regulation of Commerce in a Body of representatives whose Constituents are very differently circumstanced — Intrigue and coalition among the No Staple States, taking advantage of the disunion and inattenti[on] of the South, might fix a ruinous Monopoly upon the trade & productions of the Staple States that have not Ships or Seamen for the Exportation of their valuable productions — You know Sir that the Spirit of Commerce is a Spirit of Avarice, and that whenever the power is given the will certainly follows to monopolise, to engross, and to take every possible advantage. I am free therefore to own that I think it both safest & best to give no such power to Congress, leave it to that Body to point out what is fit to be done in this [line], and founding their plans on principles of moderation and most accordant to the actual state & situation of the different States, to recommend their systems for the general adoption. I am persuaded that this plan would be successful to every good purpose. A contrary one would, I verily believe, be more hurtful, much more hurtful to us, than even the crabbed selfish system of Great Britain — M<sup>r</sup> Adams in a late letter to me from London, writing of Britain he says “*the Nation must be made to feel — but this is a work of time, and it is dangerous work, because it may in such inflammable circumstances provoke War*” — Indeed our proceedings with that Nation should be well considered, and cautiously practised upon —

I am very fearful of the proceedings of our approaching session — Breach of Treaty — Paper Money —

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Violation of public faith — are all, I am informed, much talked of — Either of the three will be sufficient to injure us greatly, as well as the U. States — and I assure you Sir, from the best authority, that such things as these have already deeply & essentially injured the American character in Europe generally. M<sup>r</sup> Adams says in the same letter “ I hope that persons & property in America will be held sacred ”

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of next month I shall return to Virg<sup>a</sup> after thirteen months absence from my family.

With very great respect & esteem I have the honor to be dear Sir your most obedient and very humble Servant.

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October the 11<sup>th</sup> 1785

DEAR SIR,

I make no doubt but that you have seen in the public papers that my ill state of health had compelled me to quit this City and Congress to seek relief from leisure and the Chalybiate springs near Philadelphia — It is that circumstance that has prevented me from the pleasure of replying sooner to your favor of August the 22<sup>d</sup>, which I now do with many thanks for its obliging contents. The advantage that I received to my health from relaxation and the medical power of the springs I visited, has been very flattering, and will I hope furnish me with a stock of health sufficient to finish my Presidential year with some degree of comfort. I hear with singular pleasure that the very important business of opening the navigation of Potomac goes on so well. I well know how much

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXVIII. 189.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the community will be obliged for success in this useful work to your exertions. By a letter lately received the hon. Col<sup>o</sup> Monroe, who is at Pittsburg and intends to be at the Indian Treaty this month at the mouth of Great Miami; we learn that the temper of the Indian Nations *as nations*, is not unfriendly to the U. States, and promising success, as well to the coming Treaty, as to the execution of the plan for surveying and disposing of territory beyond the Ohio for payment of the public debt. Col<sup>o</sup> Monroe represents the Intruding Settlers N. W. of Ohio to be very few in number and they disposed to obey quickly the orders of Congress. The negotiation with M<sup>r</sup> Gardoque proceeds so slowly, and as yet so ineffectually, that I fancy the free navigation of Mississippi is a point that we may take it for granted will not hastily be concluded upon. So that mischiefs from that source are probably postponed to a distant day. In G. Britain, they have been so engrossed with Irish affairs, that as yet M<sup>r</sup> Adams has done nothing at that Court. He represents the Ministry, or a majority of them, as seemingly well disposed to us; but fearing to do anything decisive because of the discontent and irritability of the National mind, which he thinks only wants money to recommence the War with us—On which account he recommends careful, steady, & moderate conduct on our part. The dispute between the Emperor & Holland is not yet settled that we know of—But a formidable league of Prussia, Saxony, & Hanover; with some other powers, is actually signed to preserve inviolate the present State of the Empire against the intrigues of the Emperor who is stated as being much alarmed at this League.

My brother A. Lee, who will have the honor of delivering you this letter will also supply any defect of intelligence that may have happened on my part—



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I pray you Sir to present my respectful compliments to your Lady with my wishes for her health.

I have the honor to be, with the most perfect esteem, respect, and regard; dear Sir your most affectionate and obedient Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October the 14. 1785

I hope my dear Cousin has returned to Phil<sup>a</sup> brim full of health and Law — But say, is it law, or is it the study of law alone, that is inconsistent with the duties of friendship? There must be something in the way, or it never could have happened that I should not have received a letter from you in so great length of time — My silence could not be the cause, As your humanity would readily find an apology for me in my very ill state of health — The Holker cause was not tried it seems, but the Election strife is over, and I wish to know the event, as well in other places as Phil<sup>a</sup> — Nor will it be unentertaining to know something of the Manœuvres of the contending parties — Curse & doubly curse the Algerines for these Pirates I fear have too certainly made war on our Commerce — Paul Jones from L'Orient informs us that Mons<sup>r</sup> Soulanges letter was there & its contents believed — These Infernals having put all the Commercial nations of Europe under contribution, except Portugal — The trade of Portugal with Ours, is all that remains for them to Plunder — Several years ago, your worthy Father sent me a Dutch Fan to Virginia, and now the Skreens of it are all worn out — I shall thank you exceedingly for getting a new Sett of the different finesses made for me by the best hand according to

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the enclosed measure ; that I may take them with me to Virginia as I pass thro your City on the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12 of next month — My M<sup>rs</sup> Lee writes me that she must & will have a handsome Bread Tray for serving bread to Table, also a Basket proper for holding clean plates, and one for foul plates — Now you must be informed that this demand comes from too high Authority for me to venture neglecting it — therefore I must again put your friendship to Work, to find these out, genteel ones, and that they may be ready to go by M<sup>r</sup> Crump who I expect will return to Phil<sup>a</sup> early in next month by Water — I hope to see my Gun & Pistols here handsomely repair'd before the 5<sup>th</sup> of next month — My best love attends the whole family & that at Germantown — And I pray God to have you in his holy keeping —

farewell.

Put the Doctor in mind of my Gum rubrum astringens Gambiense — for it is the Sheet Anchor of my health —

TO [JAMES MONROE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October the 17. 1785

DEAR SIR,

I have received the letter that you did me the honor to write to me from Pittsburg, and I am much pleased to find by it that the Indian nations, as nations, are not indisposed to us — I think it augurs well to our treaty at Miami, and for the survey & sale of western territory.

I am very unhappy to inform you of the death of our most worthy friend M<sup>r</sup> Hardy. He has been sick almost ever since you left this place, and early this morning he departed this life, greatly reduced, and

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Monroe Papers, VII. 844.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

without much apparent pain — His loss to the public is great — I wish sincerely that the Assembly may be both able & willing to fill his vacancy with equal ability & virtue — but unfortunately for the good of society, such characters as poor Hardy are rarely to be found, and too frequently bad men are<sup>1</sup> ready to oppose merit & to thrust themselves forward into places that should be filled alone by sense & virtue. Col<sup>o</sup> Grayson proposes to sell the horses that you & M<sup>r</sup> Hardy had in partnership, as they will soon eat their heads off here, and where no owner wants their use. We have too much reason to apprehend that the Algarines have declared war against our Commerce — These pirates having lately made a profitable peace with Spain, they have now (to the shame of Europe be it said) almost the whole of Europe their Tributaries, so that having little plunder now to get from that quarter, the Arm of Rapine is stretched out against us. It is most clear to me from M<sup>r</sup> Adams's account of what passed between him & the Secretary of State concerning the British debts, that if our Assemblies do not irritate by throwing obstructions in the way of the Treaty of peace we shall obtain every reasonable wish concerning time for payment — He seems to be apprehensive of Violence — for he says "It cannot be too strongly recommended to let persons & property be held sacred." You will find that the business of Facilities, insulting as it is to us who have few or none, has been forced upon us as contended for when you were here. It is to me most plainly<sup>2</sup> proper, that our Assembly should Tax our people, only for Federal purposes, what will suffice to pay our Quota of the foreign interest, and<sup>3</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> The word "found" is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> An illegible word is here erased.

<sup>3</sup> The words "that of" are here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

expences of the federal government; and not admit any facilities to be received in discharge of the Taxes but such as have *originated* with our own Citizens — This last will disappoint the plan of purchasing our produce with the certificates of these Northern States which will pay the domestic Creditors in these States whilst our own go unpaid — And thus we shall really give a bribe to prevent the settlement of our Accounts and consequently prevent the payment of our own Citizens who are at least as large Creditors of the U. States as the Citizens of any other State —

I shall be very happy to see you at Chantilly before you leave Virginia to return to Congress —

I am dear Sir your friend and Servant.

P. S. Poor Hardy is to be buried in the evening of tomorrow under the directions and Auspices of Congress — for his funeral we are adjourned two days.

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October the 17. 1785

MY DEAR SIR,

I am well satisfied that your friendship has long since suggested an apology for my not sooner answering the letter that you did me the honor to write to me on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August last, because you will have been informed that my ill state of health compelled me to quit business and Congress, to seek for remedy in the medical waters lately discovered in Pennsylvania. I thank God that my health has been so restored as to enable me to return to my duty here, and I hope with a stock sufficient at least to carry me thro my Presi-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Bancroft Collection. Addressed to him at Boston and franked by Lee.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

dential year with some comfort to myself. The Governors letter concerning Cap<sup>t</sup> Stanhopes misconduct was immediately laid before Congress, and yours to me communicated to your delegates. In my absence Congress determined to send the papers to M<sup>r</sup> Adams in order to place the matter before Cap<sup>t</sup> Stanhopes Superiors. It is certainly very difficult to judge of Courts & Courtiers, because hypocrisy, simulation, and dissimulation reign throughout — but so far as we may judge from the civilities shewn to M<sup>r</sup> Adams, and the professions made to him, we may suppose that the behavior of Capt. Stanhope (which seems to have been a complication of folly & insolence) will not be approved at S<sup>t</sup> James's.

We do not find however, that the civil appearances about the Court of London have as yet produced any solid good effects — for still they hold the Posts, still they encroach on our Eastern boundary, and still their Commercial regulations continue crabbed, and hurtful to themselves & to us. Perhaps time may heal the wound that yet rankles in the National breast — I fear it is too true that the Algerines, these *Hostes humani generis*, have commenced<sup>1</sup> war upon our Commerce, and if we are not lucky enough to purchase a peace from these Barbarians before they taste the sweets of plundering our Commerce, it may be long before we can quiet them, and be most difficult to accomplish. — As for warring with them, as some propose, thro choice<sup>2</sup> — I say that it is a very crude & strange opinion. In such a War we shall have every thing to loose and nothing to gain. Is it possible that G. B. can have been so wicked as to have stimulated this War for Commercial purposes, and in revenge for our separation? — If it were not that all things are

<sup>1</sup> The word "the" is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for "force" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

possible with the corrupt Politicians of this day, I should say that they could not be so base — I think it seems probable that Ireland will not receive the British regulation of their commerce, and if they reject the propositions with proper spirit, it may terminate not only in relieving Ireland, but also in disposing the haughty Britons to be more reasonable in the Commercial system with us.

I beg that my respectful compliments may be acceptable to M<sup>rs</sup> Adams, and that you may be assured of the perfect esteem and regard with which I am your friend and affectionate Servant.

My compliments, if you please, to Gen. Warren — I shall write to him soon.

TO THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK 19<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 1785

MY DEAR NEPHEW.

By your favor of the 17<sup>th</sup> instant I find that you have mistaken my request concerning the Dutch Fan — It is not a new Fan that I want, but only new Skreens for the old one, according to the measure that I enclosed you. The reasons that you give for keepi[ng your]<sup>2</sup> letter secret are very judicious & I shall do as you desire — You give me hopes that I shall see you here soon, so that I shall defer saying anything further on the subject of your letter, leaving the rest to the pleasure of a personal conversation —

Poor Hardy is no mor[e. His?]<sup>2</sup> loss is realy a very great one — My be[st love?]<sup>2</sup> attends the family. God bless you [farewell?]<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. Addressed to him “at Dr. Shippen in / Second Street / Philadelphia.”

<sup>2</sup> Hole in the Ms.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I wish the Workman may be very exact about the Skreens, otherwise they may not fit the Fan for which they are intended —

I shall leave this City for Phil<sup>a</sup> on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of next month — Can you time it so as that we may travel back together? —

TO JOHN ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October the 23rd 1785

DEAR SIR.

I received the letter that you did me the honor to write me on the 15th of July with the pleasure that always accompanies the receipt of letters from my old and much esteemed friend. I see with pleasure that your reception at the Court of London has been such as to promise you an agreeable residence there; which may be somewhat pleasant altho you should unfortunately fail in the principal objects of your mission. This last however I yet hope will not be the case, since you represent the majority of the Ministry as able, and thinking rightly with respect to us. The national mind cannot sure continue long under the delusion created by the most vindictive and abominable characters in the world. I mean the Tory Refugees, who by themselves and by those who for sinister purposes, have suffered themselves to be imposed on by those people, are industriously keeping up on both sides of the water a contentious & mischievous spirit to the great hurt of both countries. We know them here, and by this they ought to be known in England,

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original furnished by the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams. A text with variations and addressed "Hon. John Adams, Esq./Minister Plenipo. to the Court of London" is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 67.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

to which country they have caused by their misrepresentations such infinite evil. In the mind of a person acquainted with the true state of things, there can remain no doubt but that this moment is the most favorable one that will probably occur again for G. Britain to make a favorable Treaty of Commerce with these U. States. The events which took place immediately succeeding the war, and which have produced such wrong conclusions touching the British security of possessing our Commerce exclusively, cannot prevent our Trade from going as it is fast proceeding to do, into other channels, where it is driven by the mistaken discouragements that are imposed by Britain. I have myself no doubt that smart duties of Tonnage will be laid by all the States on the Vessels of those nations with whom we have not Commercial Treaties, and that such will be prohibited from importing into our Ports productions or manufactures not the growth or manufacture of the country importing them. Thus these States, forced into it by the intemperance of G. Britain and led by her example, will be forming laws to discourage a Commerce that might be so mutually beneficial; if wisdom and temper prevailed over passion and folly. The project of a Treaty proposed by you to the Court where you are, is so perfectly just, and will be so greatly beneficial to both, that I cannot help hoping that it will yet be agreed to.

I am greatly obliged to you Sir, for your good intentions respecting Mr Steptoe, and I entreat that you will so have him in your mind as that you may effectually promote his views whensoever an opportunity shall present. Much harmony has prevailed this year in Congress, and I hope that the same concord will continue.

The present federal year being on the point of ending I shall return to Virginia, as I mentioned in a for-

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

mer letter, you may write very securely to me under the care of Messrs Wallace, Johnson, & Muir Merchants in London who will safely forward your letters.

I am with most sincere and perfect esteem and regard dear Sir, your most obedient, and very humble Servant.

P.S. Be so kind as forward Mr Jefferson's letter to him by the safest opportunity that you can meet with — I have since determined to send Mr Jefferson's letter by the French Packet.

[THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS] TO [THE AMERICAN MINISTER TO ENGLAND]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

[JOHN ADAMS]

NEW YORK October the 24th 1785

DEAR SIR.

Having yesterday written you a long letter, I have now only to request your attention to the following business, which is of very great importance to those whom it concerns, and who form a considerable portion of the Citizens of these States. The representation of those professing the Church of England system of religion, having been lately assembled at Philadelphia where Lay and Clerical deputies from seven States were convened in General Convention for the purpose among other things, of preserving and maintaining a succession of divines in their Church, in a manner which they judge consonant to the gospel, and no way interfering with the religious or civil rights of others, have sent an address to the Archbishops and Bishops of England proposing a plan for the consecration of

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original furnished through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

American Bishops. It is imagined that before any thing is done in this business by the Bishops of England, that they will consult the King and Ministry; who it is apprehended may now, as heretofore, suppose that any step of the kind being taken in England, might be considered here as an officious intermeddling with our affairs that would give offence on this side the water — Should this be the case the Church of England Members in Congress have the greatest reliance on your liberal regard for the religious rights of all men, that you will remove mistaken scruples from the mind of administration, by representing how perfectly consonant it is with our Revolution principles professed thro-out all the States, that every denomination of Christians has a right to pursue its own religious modes, interfering not with others. That instead of giving offence it must give content, by evidencing a friendly disposition to accommodate the people here who are of the Church in question. In proof of this, Congress did lately shew their attention to the accommodation of this class of Christians, by communicating to the different Executives your information from the Danish Minister of that King's willingness so to facilitate the business of ordination for our church — And the Assembly of Virginia hath incorporated this Society Under which Act of incorporation the Convention was held in that State that sent both Lay and Clerical deputies to the General Convention lately held in Philadelphia.

I have the honor to be with sentiments of the truest esteem and regard, dear Sir, your most obedient and very humble Servant.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS JEFFERSON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October the 29. 1785

DEAR SIR

My ill state of health having compelled me to look for benefit from the medical springs lately discovered in the vicinity of Philadelphia, I there received the letter that you did me the honor to write me on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July — but tho M<sup>r</sup> Houdon arrived there with D<sup>r</sup> Franklin when I was in the City, the former of these gentlemen did not deliver your letter to me, but it found me thro the medium of the Post. I have not yet seen M<sup>r</sup> Houdon, nor has he been in any manner before Congress that I know of — he went, immediately after his landing to General Washingtons from whence I understand that he has returned to this City a day or two ago, but I have not yet seen him. Your request, independent of his singular merit, will secure him every civility and service in my power — I think that you have cause, from your statement, to complain of the remissness of your Correspondents — Were I not prevented by the unhappy state of my health, most certainly I should be more attentive to gratify you in a way that certainly must be very agreeable to you, sequestered as you are from your own Country. I think that we have reason to suppose that the requisition of this year (which with the plan for surveying & selling part of the Western lands I have now the honor to enclose you) will produce, at least a sufficiency to pay with credit the interest of our foreign debt and to support the expences of the federal government — The unliquidated state of the domestic debt, and the unequal business of the facilities may perhaps obstruct for the present the payment of the domestic interest —

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Jefferson Correspondence, Letters to Jefferson, Ser. 6, Vol. 2, No. 41.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I understand the displeasure of the Commissioners of the Treasury arose from M<sup>r</sup>. Grand's failing to comply with orders given him to pay the interest due to the Crown of France which has created uneasiness and doubt of our punctuality when these would not have existed had M<sup>r</sup>. Grand not undertaken to pay himself instead of the Government — However, I suppose that the Commissioners will take care to make good the payments omitted by M<sup>r</sup>. Grand to have been made to Government. Vermont remains as it was, and we have heard nothing lately concerning Franklin — The Virginia Assembly are agreed, so far as I know, to indulge Kentucky provided it shall be agreeable to the U. States to receive them into the Confederacy so that they may for every purpose be a part of the general system — A proposition is depending before Congress to declare the sense of the Union against all future dismemberments without the consent of the State to be dismembered and of the United States — Concerning your idea of packets I have spoken to some Members — the expence alarms, and they seem rather to approve of sending on occasion a Courier in the packets as they now are — But since a plan has lately been adopted for sending the Mails by Stages instead of Post Riders, which will not only quicken communication greatly, but very much increase the Post Office Revenue, I hope that Packets as well as Cross Posts may e'er long be supported. We have lost poor Hardy who dyed here after some weeks illness — The Surveyors are now at work (under the Ordinance) N. West of Ohio, and a Treaty with the Western Indians is <sup>1</sup> holding at Great Miami — Our Assembly is now in Session, but we have not heard whether Harrison or Tyler has got the Chair, but certainly the contest will have been warm and pretty equal — My Presi-

<sup>1</sup> An erasure follows here.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

dential year ends in 9 days, after which I shall return to Virginia for some months at least, my return to Congress will depend on the state of my health which is better indeed, but far yet from being as I wish it. Let me be where I will I shall always be happy to hear from you and to give you the news of our Country such as it may be. My brother Arthur Lee being resident here as one of the Commissioners of the Treasury of the U. States, will receive your letters for me and forward them to Virginia—I shall esteem it a very particular favor if you will be so good as send me one of the newly invented Philosophical Lamps which I understand to be handsome, useful, and æconomical; employing a small quantity of oil to great advantage in giving light. I will either thankfully repay the cost to your order in Virginia, or remit it to you in France thro the medium of my Brother Arthur from this place. I suppose that you may contrive it by one of the french packets to my brothers care in this City. And it will add to the favor if you accompany the Machine with a description of its use.

I am dear Sir, with sentiments of the sincerest esteem and regard, your most obedient and very humble Servant.

P.S.

Remember me if you please to M<sup>r</sup> Short & tell him that I answered immediately the only letter that I have had the pleasure to receive from him

TO THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, 30th October, 1785.

I thank you, my dear marquis, for your very affectionate letter, by Mr. Houdon; that gentleman arrived in Philadelphia, and proceeded immediately to Mount

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 68.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Vernon ; he has been ever since with General Washington, so that I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing him in this city. It is very happy for America, that events of such high importance should have taken place here as to invite artists, of Mr. Houdon's great reputation, to visit us. I hope that he will find every thing here agreeable to his wishes. As I take strong part in every thing that conduces to your happiness, so I have contemplated with pleasure, the great satisfaction you must have received at the review of those excellent troops of the emperor and of Prussia. A philosophic mind is apt, however, to regret that such fine exertions of human art should so often be employed for the destruction of the human species. I will comfort myself here by hoping, that these will be used to suppress and control, not to promote the bad purposes of ambition. It raises high the glory of Louis the Sixteenth, that his reign has been so eminent for promoting the good of mankind, whilst sovereigns in general, employ their power to increase the miseries of human nature ! Will it not happen, during the reign of this glorious monarch, that those lawless pirates, upon the African coast of the Mediterranean, will be compelled, by some proper system, to respect the rights of men, and the laws of nations, instead of receiving annual stipends for not doing what it is really infamous to do. I mean roaming about to injure, oppress, and destroy, their unoffending fellow creatures. Among the many leagues that are formed, why may not one be made for the purpose of protecting the rights of humanity. I hope, sir, that you have not forgotten your design, again to make us happy, by your return to these United States.

I have the honour to be, with sentiments of the highest affection and friendship, my dear marquis,

Your most ob't and very humble serv't.

Marquis DE LA FAYETTE.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[TO THE SPANISH MINISTER TO THE  
UNITED STATES] <sup>1</sup>

DON DIEGO DE GARDOQUI

DEAR SIR— CHANTILLY, Virginia, December 3d, 1785.

It is with great pleasure that I embrace this opportunity of saluting you, by my friend and relation Colonel Henry Lee, who is going to Congress, a member of that body. I hope he will find you in good health, and still growing better, for I am sure that it will conduce much to the good of Spain, and this country, that his Catholic majesty should continue to be represented here by a gentleman who has so good a knowledge of both countries, with so candid a desire to benefit both by the knowledge he possesses. My return to Congress, in the course of the coming year, will depend so much upon the state of my health, that I dare not say yet, how it will be; but, certainly, it will add much to my happiness to have the pleasure of seeing you again. I pray God to bless you long with health and every happiness; and being, with considerations of the highest respect and esteem, Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

His Excellency Don DIEGO DE GARDOQUE,  
Plenipotentiary encargado de negocios, of  
his Catholic majesty, to the United States.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN] <sup>2</sup>

MY DEAR NEPHEW.

CHANTILLY DECEMBER 4<sup>th</sup> 1785

The Saturday sennight after I left you brought me safe to this place where I have the happiness to find all well — Our felicity would be complete indeed if our

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 69.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Philadelphia friends made part of our Circle — I am not without hopes that it may one day or other be the case. Already I treasure up your promise of visiting these parts before you cross the Atlantic. You have numerous friends here who will all rejoice to see you, and the fine sparkling black eyes of little Frank will glisten wonderfully at the beautiful blue eyes of his fair cousin Peggy Livingston — Whether or not my health will permit my return to Congress next year is a question that I dare not undertake to answer yet — Neither my favorite little Boat or the Box that I left at your house with part of my baggage are yet arrived here, nor have we heard a tittle of the Vessel (M<sup>r</sup> Wyncoop & Seaman's) that was to have sailed with them the Sunday after I left you! Where is the Vessel & where are my things — if they yet remain in Phil<sup>a</sup> the Vessel commanded by a Capt. Stewart that lays at Arch Street Wharf will bring & land them for me at Zachary Weavers where he landed the Plaster of Paris. he is Stationary Vessel between Alexandria & Phil<sup>a</sup>. The plate & the Bread Baskets, bless me, the most important of all because commanded by the highest authority, as all Married men know, which pleasing influence will in due Season be felt by my friend to whom I write — The non arrival of these baskets has been imputed to accident, for says she, M<sup>r</sup> Shippen is polite and exact, so that no omission can possibly have arisen from him. I agree that it is so. And we resolve to expect them by the first fair wind. The Skreens too for my Dutch fan that I was at such pains to send the measures, of, unfortunately I forgot in my haste. And now my Fan is quite useless for want of the Skreens. I pray you my dear Cousin to let these things be sent expeditiously, together with two or three ounces of the Butter Nut Syrup that your worthy father promised to procure for me. By means of a M<sup>r</sup> Thomson Merchant here



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

from your City I can & will order you payment for these things the Moment that I know their cost — The Roll or two of narrow pink Ribbon for Molly's Tam-bour is also much wanted — We all here join most cordially in love and compliments to your whole family — And I pray you not to forget my best affections for the Old Doctor when you see him —

God bless you, farewell.

Letters for me may come for the present, (either by water), or by post, to the care of my Son Thomas Lee at Dumfries.

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

DEAR SIR.

CHANTILLY Decem — 12 1785.

My Presidential year being ended, I had left New York for this place (from which and from my family I had been thirteen months absent) before letters which you did me the honor to write me on the twenty-sixth of August & the sixth and seventh of September came to hand, which has prevented me from showing civilities to Mr Storer and Mr Wengrove that I should otherwise have taken pleasure in doing. The state of my health is so precarious (being prevented by the Gout in my right hand from writing myself) that it is uncertain when I shall be permitted to return to Congress. But let me be where I will, I shall always be happy to correspond with you. My brother Arthur Lee who now resides at New York, a Commissioner of the [Treasury] of the U. S. will receive and forward to me such letters as you are pleased to write. It gives me pleasure to hear of Col-Smith as so agreeable a secretary to you, indeed I had expected so from his politeness,

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original supplied through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

his good sense, and his spirit. It is certainly a misfortune both to the United States and to Great Britain that a singular kind of after wisdom, the latter should so perpetually keep the two countries at variance with each other. To profit from experience so becometh Nations as well as individuals Yet it denoteth much ill to both when advice is not taken from that best . . . of knowledge. It is this kind of wisdom that having already irrevocably lost to Great Britain a great and valuable part of her dominions, is now proceeding to deprive her of a great and valuable part of her Commerce. Dear Sir I plainly perceive that the Statesmen and the commercial mistakes of that country are going to force these United States contrary to their inclination, into systems that will probably prevent our trade from ever flowing as it probably would have done, into British channels. It is true that we may be injured in the commencement of these experiments, but it is certain that those who compel them will be more hurt. A similar experiment has been lately made, yet such is the curse attending Britain and British Statesmen, that they will neither remember the one, or profit from the other. I join with you in hoping soon to see American Factories established in the East and certainly it will be highly agreeable to me to find Mr Steptoe promoting there his country's and his own good

I have the honor to be with every sentiment of esteem and regard your friend and Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR NEPHEW

CHANTILLY December the 12 1785

The Bread Basket, the plate warmer, the Boat, and the Box have all Safely arrived. By the coming of

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the two former I have escaped a scouring, and your character is established for polite attention and punctuality. For M<sup>rs</sup> Lee says "tis true they are not exactly the things sent for, but they are pretty and I am contented. Especially as a proper Wicker China plate Basket may hereafter be sent."

Thus you see my dear Sir that a foundation is laid for further employment. For I am bound to take hints without waiting for express desires. I am therefore to request that you will be upon the lookout for such a basket and send it forward by the first opportunity. I note the cost of those already sent and will Shortly forward to you a Bill on Philadelphia for their Value and the supposed Cost of the basket now written for. My amanuensis says that M<sup>r</sup> Shippen may send us a pair of craping irons, and so say I, if he pleases. A severe and painful attack of the Gout in my right hand prevents me from using it at present but even the Gout must not suffer me to forget to assure you of the Constant affection of this family for you and their other relations in second Street.

I am very sincerely,  
Yours.

P.S.

I hope my good friend your father will excuse me for reminding him to send me two or three Ounces of the Butternut Syrup of which I am in great want of.

### TO THEODERIC LEE<sup>1</sup>

DEAR SIR,

CHANTILLY Jan<sup>y</sup> 27. 1786

My Son Ludwell will deliver to you £4. 12. 10 for the discharge of your account against me — John

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection, 1771-1791. Addressed, "M<sup>r</sup> Theoderic Lee / Merch<sup>t</sup> / Alexandria // favored by / M<sup>r</sup> L. Lee."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Weaver delivered safely the things that you sent by him, but I never knew 'till he came down that you had sent the Raisins, Almonds & Berries, for Robinson did not inform me or send me your letter — After much enquiry, in consequence of your letter by Weaver, I come to learn that Robinson belonged to Yeocomico, and a few days ago I got, by sending 40 miles for them, your joint letter with the goods — The Raisins & Berries so damaged as to be fit for very little. I thank you however for the trouble you have taken. If M<sup>r</sup> Watson can prevail with any vessel going to New England to call at Zachary Weavers and carry a Barrel of Tobacco for chewing to General Whipple of Portsmouth in New Hampshire I shall be much obliged — M<sup>r</sup> Watson may remember that in the fall of 1784, when I was on my way to Congress, in his Store a New England Captain promised me to call at Zachary Weavers for this barrel of Chewing Tob<sup>o</sup> — but he never called & the barrel has been laying there ever since. Zachary Weaver lives on the Virg<sup>a</sup> Shore nearly opposite to Blackstones Island and where Hallows's Marsh joins the Main high land at a place called the Table of Poplars.

Give my service to M<sup>r</sup> Watson and believe me to be dear Cousin your affectionate friend & Relation.

TO COLONEL MARTIN PICKETT<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, March 5th, 1786.

SIR,

It is certainly true that a *popular government* cannot flourish without *virtue* in the people, and it is as true that *knowledge* is a principal source of virtue; these facts render the establishment of schools, for the

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 70.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

instruction of youth, a fundamental concern in all free communities. I wish that it had been made a primary duty of the legislature, by our constitution, as it has been wisely done by some of the states in this union. Such establishments will be the surest means of perpetuating our free forms of government, for, when men are taught to know, and well to understand, the great inherent rights of human nature, they will take care not to suffer the hands of vice, of violence, or of ignorance, to rob them of such inestimable blessings. You may suppose, sir, that, with these sentiments, I see with pleasure every attempt to establish seminaries of learning, and that my endeavours shall not be wanting to promote the laudable purpose, by every means in my power. You say there are several beautiful situations on Spicer's tenement, for the purpose of the proposed academy, and that he is willing to part with any two acres for that use. I do hereby, sir, declare to you, and assure the other gentlemen concerned with you in the establishment of this academy, that whenever Randall Spicer's consent for this purpose, shall be tendered me in writing, and a fee simple deed be offered me to sign, for conveying a clear and effectual fee simple right in any such two acres, for the sole use of a public school, or seminary of learning, and for no other use or purpose whatsoever, I will sign and execute such deed with pleasure, and desire no other gratuity but the satisfaction that I shall receive in knowing the salutary effects that will be derived to the good people of Fauquier in particular, and the community in general, from so useful an establishment. With my respects to all the gentlemen concerned in this praiseworthy business, I remain, Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

Col. MARTIN PICKETT, Fauquier.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO JOHN HOPKINS<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY 22<sup>d</sup> April 1786.

SIR,

By the Hon. M<sup>r</sup> A. Lee who arrived here from Congress last Tuesday I am informed that the Board of Treasury have sent you proper Indents for the purpose of your granting evidences of interest due on Loan office Certificates up to the last day of the year 1784 according to the Requisition of Congress of last September. I have therefore sent my Overseer to Richmond with my Certificates to receive from you Indents of interest agreeably to the last Requisition.

Your last settlement and payment of interest on these Certificates was up to the close of the year 1782. So that now you will please to send me Indents for interests for the two years 1783 and 1784. In the calculation of interest that you made on one of these certificates, to wit, that for 300 dollars issued on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of december 1777, you reduce the Nominal value to Specie 222 dol<sup>s</sup> 85/90 & 4/8 and calculate the interest on such reduced value; whereas by the Resolution of Congress of January the 15<sup>th</sup> 1784 Journal Vol 9. P. 35 you will be pleased to observe that the interest of such Certificates is liable to no depreciation, but the interest is to be calculated on the full nominal value, and there-fore interest should have been calculated on 300 dollars instead of 222 dollars & 85/90 & 4/8 making a difference to me of about 4 dollars & 2 thirds — Be so kind Sir as rectify this in your present issues of Indents and send me interest on the full value of the nominal dollars for this Certificate, as well for the years 1783 & 1784 as for the difference between your former calculation & the right method herein

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Emmet Collection 9681.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

before stated. I have never received the second letter that you promised me, nor indeed is it necessary, as I am well satisfied that I was misinformed, and that your conduct with respect to me was blameless. I have only now to request the favor of you to be so kind as give my Overseer all possible dispatch, as he is much wanted at home in this busy Season; and if you please to send me a short Statement of the Interest you issue on these my Certificates I shall thank you.

I am Sir your most  
obedient and very  
humble Servant.

JOHN HOPKINS Esq<sup>r</sup>

TO [THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS]<sup>1</sup>

[NATHANIEL GORHAM]

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA June 20. 1786.

SIR,

The enclosed papers that I have the honor of transmitting to your Excellency for the consideration of Congress I have but now received altho they are dated in the last year.

I am perfectly satisfied that this demand of M<sup>r</sup> Schweighauser will be found, on due enquiry, to be right; and that this worthy Gentleman who has been long injuriously baffled of his honest demand plainly against the will of Congress, will now be fully paid by the effectual measures that Congress in their wisdom and justice shall direct.

I have the honor to be, with sentiments of the most perfect respect esteem, Sir, your Excellencies most obedient and very humble Servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, L. 78, Vol. 14, p. 723.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

[EDMUND RANDOLPH]

CHANTILLY March 26. 1787

SIR,

The letter that your Excellency did me the honor to write me on the 23<sup>d</sup> instant I received this day, and I assure you that it is with much regret I find myself compelled to decline accepting the honorable Office<sup>2</sup> to which I have been appointed

The circumstances of my health Sir will not permit me to think of going northward sooner than the middle of June, and then, if I am more than convalescent, my appointment to Congress will carry me to that Assembly. There are so many gentlemen of good hearts and sound heads appointed to the Convention, at Philadelphia, that I feel a disposition to repose with confidence in their determinations.

Be so kind Sir as present me most respectfully to the Honorable Council and assign the reasons to them that I have given for requesting to be excused from going to the Convention.

I have the honor to be, with sentiments of the highest regard and esteem

Sir your Excellencies most obedient & very humble servant.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection, 1771-1791.

<sup>2</sup> Lee was notified of his appointment as a delegate to the Federal Convention in the following letter from Edmund Randolph, the Governor of Virginia:

“ RICHMOND March 20<sup>th</sup> 1787

“ THE HONBLE RICHARD H. LEE,

“ SIR, I feel a particular pleasure in communicating to you your appointment, as a deputy to the foederal convention at Philadelphia in may next. The nomination was made by the executive today, and, if it be acceptable to you I shall transmit a more formal testimonial by the

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON<sup>1</sup>]

CHANTILLY April 16. 1787

DEAR SIR,

I have the honor to send you by this opportunity the Act of Assembly passed in 1772, by which yourself, with me and others, were appointed Trustees to manage the sale of the Land held in Tail by M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Booth and his Lady, and to purchase and settle other lands to descend as those in Tail would have done. M<sup>r</sup> Booth did long since sell the Intailed Land to Squire Lee of Maryland, and purchased other land of Col<sup>o</sup> Thruston, out of which, I understand, he proposes to settle on his Son a satisfaction for the Land that was intailed.

You will please to observe Sir, that this Act has a suspending Clause, and if it was never assented to, then our right to act in this business has never existed, but M<sup>r</sup> Booth the younger (as heir to his Mother) having the Fee simple under the Act of Assembly passed in 1776 for destroying Intails, possesses now the only power to make a conveyance to the purchaser. As these Acts for docking Intails were of a private nature, the persons concerned did formerly interest themselves in such matters, and their Agents in London usually transmitted to them the Assent authenticated. On this plan, M<sup>r</sup> Booth may perhaps be in possession of this document, by which alone, it appears, that we can have any right to make a conveyance—If such shall be your opinion, and the Assent be shewn to you; I will most readily, and so undoubtedly will

earliest opportunity. As I am well persuaded, that your assistance will be agreeable to our colleagues, so can I assure you, that it will be very cordial to Sir, your mo. ob. serv<sup>t</sup>” (Virginia State Library, Executive Letter Books, 1786–1788.)

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXXI. 89.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

M<sup>r</sup> Lee the other surviving Trustee join you in a conveyance whensoever the parties shall desire it, and produce to you a proper assurance from M<sup>r</sup> Booth the younger that his father has sufficiently assured him of a full equivalent for the Land the intail of which was doct.

M<sup>rs</sup>. Lee & myself join with our daughters in presenting our best respects to Mount Vernon.

I have the honor to be dear Sir, with singular respect & esteem

Your affectionate and obedient Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY April 17. 1787

MY VERY DEAR COUSIN,

Since I parted with you and my other dear friends in Philadelphia in the fall of 1785 I have been agreeably employed in family cares and domestic concerns — This pleasant life, with much attention to my health, has restored it beyond my hopes; but yet not so firmly as to promise the power of again engaging largely with public affairs — Perhaps I may venture to Congress during the course of the coming Summer. I feel & see the unhappy state of public affairs that you describe, but I hope for amendment — We have everywhere young Men coming forward with worth and talents that promise good things —

In May next a Convention is to meet at Philadelphia for the purpose of amending our foederal Constitution — from this source perhaps we may derive some good. From the Herald's Office in London you may get the most perfect information concerning our family

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. Endorsed as sent to him "in London."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

before some of them came here, and I think that my eldest brother did lodge with the office an account of that part of the family that came here — Your Uncle A. Lee, who is now here, tells me that M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee did get from the Heralds Office a very complete account of the family — The book you allude to is in the possession of M<sup>r</sup> Fendall who married my brother's widow, & he is at present not in the Country. The elder branch of our family lives now in Shropshire near Shrewsbury and possesses undiminished the old original family Estate — I daresay that he will be glad to see you when you travel that way, and he becomes acquainted with your extraction. I received the Stockings and Socks, that you were so good as to send me, with double pleasure, because they gave me such additional proof of your friendship, and because they are so admirably fitted for the purpose they were intended. I have worn them ever since with great satisfaction — I hope my dear friend that you will continue your agreeable correspondence, it will be a great comfort to me in my retirement. But above all, I hope you will not forget your promise of coming to see us on your return to America. I assure you that I contemplate that time with great delight. Will you give my best respects to the worthy Bishop of Chester when you see him and inform him that I never received the letter he was pleased to write me by M<sup>r</sup> Beverley — The Gentleman took such measures as did indeed seem secure for conveying the Letter, but it miscarried by accident — I wish also to be affectionately remembered to my friend Edmund Jennings Esq<sup>r</sup> — If any very valuable and well approved Books in any Science (if they be not very [dear]<sup>1</sup> indeed) shall make their appearance, be so good as send them to me, and

<sup>1</sup> Ms. damaged by a hole.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

on your application to my Merchant in London Mr Thomas Blane he will pay you the money for them.

Farewell my dear Cousin and that you may be happy and return safely to your native Country is the prayer of your affectionate Uncle & friend.

TO GEORGE MASON<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, May 15th, 1787.

DEAR SIR —

It has given me much pleasure to be informed that General Washington and yourself, have gone to the convention. We may hope, from such efforts, that alterations beneficial will take place in our federal constitution, if it shall be found, on deliberate inquiry, that the evils now felt do flow from errors in that constitution; but, alas! sir, I fear it is more in vicious manners, than mistakes in form, that we must seek for the causes of the present discontent. The present causes of complaint seem to be, that Congress cannot command the money necessary for the just purposes of paying debts, or for supporting the federal government; and that they cannot make treaties of commerce, unless power unlimited, of regulating trade, be given. The confederation now gives right to name the sums necessary, and to apportion the quotas by a rule established. This rule is, unfortunately, very difficult of execution, and, therefore, the recommendations of Congress on this subject, have not been made in federal mode; so that states have thought themselves justified in non-compliance. If the rule were plain and easy, and refusal were then to follow demand, I see clearly, that no form of government whatever, short of force, will answer; for the same

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 71.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

want of principle that produces neglect now, will do so under any change not supported by power compulsory ; the difficulty certainly is, how to give this power in such manner as that it may only be used to good, and not abused to bad, purposes. Whoever shall solve this difficulty will receive the thanks of this and future generations. With respect to the want of power to make treaties of trade, for want of legislation, to regulate the general commerce, it appears to me, that the right of making treaties, and the legislative power contended for, are essentially different things ; the former may be given and executed, without the danger attending upon the states parting with their legislative authority, in the instance contended for. If the third paragraph of the sixth article were altered, by striking out the words, in pursuance of any treaties already proposed by Congress, to the courts of France and Spain ; and the proviso stricken out of the first section in the ninth article, Congress would then have a complete and unlimited right of making treaties of all kinds, and, so far, I really think it both right and necessary ; but this is very different from, and in danger far short of, giving an exclusive power of regulating trade. A minister of Congress may go to a foreign court with full power to make a commercial treaty ; but if he were to propose to such court that the eight northern states in this union, should have the exclusive right of carrying the products of the five southern states, or of supplying these states with foreign articles ; such a proposition of monopoly would be rejected ; and, therefore, no danger here from the power of making treaty ; but a legislative right to regulate trade through the states, may, in a thousand artful modes, be so abused as to produce the monopoly aforesaid, to the extreme oppression of the staple states, as they are called. I do not say that this would

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

be done, but I contend that it might be done ; and, where interest powerfully prompts, it is greatly to be feared that it would be done. Whoever has served long in Congress, knows, that the restraint of making the consent of nine states necessary, is feeble and incompetent. Some will sometimes sleep, and some will be negligent, but it is certain that improper power not given, cannot be improperly used. The human mind is too apt to rush from one extreme to another ; it appears, by the objections that came from the different states, when the confederation was submitted for consideration, that the universal apprehension was, of the too great, not the defective powers of Congress. Whence this immense change of sentiment, in a few years ? for now the cry is power, give Congress power. Without reflecting that every free nation, that hath ever existed, has lost its liberty by the same rash impatience, and want of necessary caution. I am glad, however, to find, on this occasion, that so many gentlemen, of competent years, are sent to the convention, for, certainly, "youth is the season of credulity, and confidence a plant of slow growth in an aged bosom." The states have been so unpardonably remiss, in furnishing their federal quotas, as to make impost necessary, for a term of time, with a provisional security, that the money arising shall be unchangeably applied to the payment of their public debts : that accounts of the application, shall be annually sent to each state ; and the collecting officers appointed by, and be amenable to the states ; or, if not so, very strong preventives and correctives of official abuse and misconduct, interpose, to shield the people from oppression. Give me leave, sir, to detain you a moment longer, with a proposition that I have not heard mentioned. It is that the right of making paper money shall be exclusively vested in Congress ;



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

such a right will be clearly within the spirit of the fourth section of the ninth article of the present confederation. This appears to me, to be a restraint of the last importance to the peace and happiness of the Union, and of every part of it. Knaves assure, and fools believe, that calling paper money, and making it tender, is the way to be rich and happy; thus the national mind is kept in constant ferment; and the public councils in continual disturbance by the intrigues of wicked men, for fraudulent purposes, for speculating designs. This would be a great step towards correcting morals, and suppressing legislative frauds, which, of all frauds, is the most fatal to society. Do you not think, sir, that it ought to be declared, by the new system, that any state act of legislation that shall contravene, or oppose, the authorized acts of Congress, or interfere with the expressed rights of that body, shall be *ipso facto* void, and of no force whatsoever. My respects, if you please, to your brethren of the convention, from this state, and pardon me for the liberty I have taken of troubling you with my sentiments on the interesting business that calls you to Philadelphia. I have the honour to be, with affectionate esteem and regard,

Your friend and servant,

GEORGE MASON, Esq.

### TO JAMES MONROE<sup>1</sup>

BELLE VIEW June the 18<sup>th</sup> 1787

DEAR SIR,

An unforeseen interruption deprives me of the happiness of waiting (as I intended) on M<sup>rs</sup> Monroe and

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Sprague Collection, III. 249. Addressed, "James Monroe Esq<sup>r</sup> / in / Fredericksburg // by Charles."



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

yourself, that I might take your commands to New York, for which place I am now on my way. My Servant now attends to receive any commands that your Lady or yourself have to transmit, which I shall take much pleasure in conveying. I have it in charge Sir from M<sup>rs</sup>. Lee of Stratford to present her respects to M<sup>rs</sup>. Monroe, and to express her wish that she may have the happiness of seeing M<sup>rs</sup>. Monroe at Stratford this summer. And may I add that my M<sup>rs</sup>. Lee will have much pleasure in entertaining M<sup>rs</sup>. Monroe at Chantilly.

With my compliments, and with every wish for the health & happiness of yourself and your Lady. I remain dear Sir your friend & servant.

TO [FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK July 14<sup>th</sup> 1787.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I arrived at this place a week ago almost destroyed with heat and fatigue — Here I found Grayson in the Chair of Congress as Locum Tenens for the President who is absent — After some difficulty we passed an Ordinance for establishing a temporary Government beyond the Ohio, as preparatory to the sale of that country — And now we are considering an offer made to purchase 5 or 6 millions of Acres with pub. Securities — I hope we shall agree with the Offer, but really the difficulty is so great to get any thing done, that it is not easy for the plainest propositions to succeed — We owe much money, the pressure of Taxes is very

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 190. A text, with variations, in the Virginia Historical Society is erroneously endorsed as written to Arthur Lee.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

great & much complained of — we have now something to sell that will pay the debt & discharge the greatest part of the Taxes and altho' this something is in a fair way of being soon wrested from us by the Sons of Violence, yet we have a thousand *little* difficulties that prevent us from selling! — I found the Convention at Phil<sup>a</sup> very busy & very secret, it would seem however, from variety of circumstances that we shall hear of a Government not unlike the B. Constitution — That is, an Execu[tive]<sup>1</sup> with 2 branches composing a federal Legislature, and possessing adequate Tone. This departure from Simple Democrocy seems indispensably necessary, if any government at all is to exist in N. America — Indeed the minds of men have been so hurt by the injustise, folly, and wickedness of the State Legislatures; & State Executives — that people in general seem ready for any thing — I hope however, that this tendency to extreme will be so controuled as to secure fully and completely the democratic influence acting within just bounds — The Land Speculators continue to urge the Open Mississippi immediately, against every principle of policy, common good & common sense — Upon this I shall write you more fully hereafter. The bills of R. Morris have been refused in France, to a very considerable amount it is said — Time must discover how this will work, & what it will produce. The discoveries of fraud among the great Officers of State in France proves that private embezzlement of public Money [is]<sup>1</sup> not confined to America — There seems to be much convulsion in France on this occasion at present —

My love, if you please to M<sup>rs</sup> Lee and when you have an opportunity, let me know that you are all well —

farewell.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. torn.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

P.S. I do really consider it a thing of consequence to the public interest that Col<sup>o</sup> H. Lee of Stratford should be in our next Assembly, and therefore I wish you would exert yourself with the old Squire to get his resignation, or disqualification rather, so that his Nephew may get early into the house of Delegates. I know that it is like persuading a Man to sign his own death warrant—but upon my word the state of public affairs renders this sacrifice of place & vanity, necessary.

[TO GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK July 15. 1787

DEAR SIR,

I have the honor to enclose to you an Ordinance that we have just passed in Congress for establishing a temporary government beyond the Ohio, as a measure preparatory to the sale of the Lands. It seemed necessary, for the security of property among uninformed, and perhaps licentious people, as the greater part of those who go there are, that a strong toned government should exist, and the rights of property be clearly defined. Our next object, is to consider of a proposition made for the purchase of 5 or 6 millions of Acres, in order to lessen the domestic debt. An object of much consequence this, since the extinguishment of this part of the public debt would not only relieve from a very heavy burthen, but by demolishing the Ocean of public Securities, we should stop that mischeivous deluge of speculation that now hurts our morals, and extremely injures the public affairs.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXXI. 161. Washington's reply to this letter is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 35.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Our Gazettes continue to be filled with publications against the Spanish Treaty and for opening the Mississippi, some of them plausible, but generally weak and indecent. This seems to be contending for an Object unattainable for many years, and probably Never without War not only with Spain, but most likely with the Bourbon Alliance — And by such contention exposing the Government of the United States to a dishonorable acquiescence under the Captivity of its Citizens and Confiscation of their effects by Spain on the Mississippi, or entering prematurely into a destructive war in resentment for such doings. At the same time discarding the friendship for the enmity of a powerful Monarch and thereby probably loose what we may possess, our Share of a Commerce that yields annually 4 or 5 millions of dollars for Cod fish only, independant of the Flour & many valuable articles of American production used in Spain & not interfering with their own products. To say nothing of a most lucrative Contraband Trade from the Ocean & on the Mississippi which a friend might wink at, but which a vigilant and powerful enemy will prevent. It seems to me that N. America is going, if we are prudent, to be the Entrepôt between the East Indies and Spanish America — If to these we could join the settlement of a disputed boundary and obtain a powerful Guarantee therefor, surely such considerations greatly outweigh the far sort apprehension of an Alliance of the Kentuckians with the British, and especially when we consider that a conduct which will procure the enmity of Spain, will probably force her into the open arms of G. Britain much to our Commercial and political injury. And after all, if this navigation could be opened and the benefits be such as are chimerically supposed, it must in its consequences depopulate & ruin the Old States.

The argument may shortly thus be stated — Spain

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

will not agree to the Navigation within her limits — Can we force it in 25 years — if we cannot, why risk, for an unattainable Object, the loss of valuable objects, and the incurring pernicious consequences. A Candid and impartial consideration of this subject, must, I think determine the question without difficulty — But I beg your pardon Sir for writing so much on this question, which I doubt not but you have fully considered before.

I have the honor to be with the truest respect and esteem, dear Sir, Your affectionate and most obedient Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK July 22<sup>d</sup> 1787

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Having recover'd my health much better than I ever expected to have done, I have again taken my Seat in Congress — I arrived in this City a fortnight ago, having stayed a week in Philadel<sup>a</sup> where I saw your friends all in good health and your father, as usual, in high spirits. I was extremely happy to find that you were so well placed for improvement and to see, under your own hand, such strong proof that you had greatly profited by your situation. The federal convention at Phil<sup>a</sup> is proceeding slowly, but I hope surely in a practical improvement of our federal Constitution. Experience seems to have proved that our governments have not Tone enough for the unruly passions of men, and so far as I can judge, the general wish is for a ballanced government where the powers shall be placed independently as in England; and of duration somewhat longer than the present. Congress is pro-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ceeding with the ordinary business until the Convention shall report their plan for consideration and recommendation to the different States—I suppose it will be recommended to the States to call Conventions for the special purpose of approving the new System, that it may rest on the broad base of the peoples choice rather than on the more feeble opinion of the ordinary Legislatures—In my last to you from Virg<sup>a</sup> I requested you to send me a few of the newest books, if there were any published of high Characters and to apply to M<sup>r</sup> Tho<sup>s</sup> Blane Merchant in London for the Cash to pay for them, and to deliver them to him that they might be forwarded to me. If you have not already complied with this request, you need not now trouble yourself about it, because I have written to M<sup>r</sup> Blane for as many books as my finances will allow me to devote in one year to that article. But you will very much oblige me by getting for me one of the most improved Modern Lamps of polished Tin, such as Doctor Franklin brought over with him for giving great splendor of light to a Parlour where company sit—If, in order to use this Lamp, any explanation is necessary, let such explanation accompany it. M<sup>r</sup> Blane will receive and forward the Lamp with my other Goods that he sends me the ensuing Fall—And he will on your application, supply the money necessary to pay for it, as I have directed him. I pray you to remember me affectionately to M<sup>r</sup> Adams and inform him that I will shortly write to him. Congress have not yet determined on complying with his request to be permitted to return home, but when they shall do so, I will certainly do my endeavor to have Col<sup>o</sup> Smith appointed Chargé des Affairs at the Court of London if such sh<sup>d</sup> be the plan fixt on. My compliments if you please to Col<sup>o</sup> Smith—I hope to hear from you e'er long, because I am always happy to do

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

so, being with the most unfeigned affection and the Truest regard My dear Cousin Yours for ever.

P.S.

July 30.

The want of 9 states prevents a determination on M<sup>r</sup> Adams's business by this packet, so that we do not know the future arrangement — I enclose you my dear Cousin a letter [for] our Relation the Bishop of Chester — It may bring you acquainted with a Learned and worthy Man — farewell —

Remember me to D<sup>r</sup> Cutting

M<sup>r</sup> Blane may be met with on the Royal Exchange — Virginia walk — Seal the Bishops letter before delivery —

TO DR. [GILBERT] BLANE<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, July 28, 1787.

SIR,

Your brother transmitted to me the valuable present that you were pleased to make me of your excellent book on the diseases of seamen, which I have read with much pleasure and instruction. It is certainly a business of great philanthropy to contribute to the health and ease of so valuable and so exposed a part of our species. I pray you, sir, to accept of my thanks for your politeness, and give me leave to assure you, that I am with much esteem and regard, sir, your most obedient and very humble servant.

DR. BLANE, Physician to his royal highness the Prince of Wales, &c.  
&c. &c.

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 73. Afterwards Sir Gilbert Blane. His career as naval, hospital, and court physician was distinguished.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [COLONEL HENRY? LEE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK July 30. 1787.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

As I take it for granted that your Nieces from the Northern Neck are with you by this time, I shall inclose a letter herein for my daughter Molly — I have been here near a month, since which nothing remarkable hath occurred — In Congress, since my coming, we have passed an Ordinance for establishing a temporary government beyond the Ohio for the more perfect security of peace and property among the rude people who will probably be the first settlers there — The form of this government, as you will see by the enclosed paper, is much more tonic than our democratic forms on the Atlantic are.

We have also ratified a Treaty of peace & commerce with the Emperor of Morocco, as you will find also in the paper — This Treaty will give some relief to our Mediterranean Trade, and may facilitate treaties with other Piratical States — Congress have just finished a contract<sup>2</sup> with a Company of Adventurers for the sale of five millions of Acres on the North west line of the Virg<sup>a</sup>. cession, by which [sa]lle, after all deductions, we hope to extinguish four millions of doll[ars] of the principal of the domestic debt, which as far as . . .<sup>3</sup> liquidated, amounts to twenty [s]even millions, five hundred sixty nine thousand, five hundred & seventy five dollars & twenty seven ninetieths — It is supposed that when the whole debt is liquidated, that it will amount to 30, millions — We are now digesting a plan for settling the land between the Scioto and the great Miami — this is a fine country and the [Lan]ds equal

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Papers, IV. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for "T[r]eaty" erased.

<sup>3</sup> Hole in the Ms., as is indicated in other places.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

to any beyond the Ohio — Out of this, between the [Lit]tle Mi[ami] & Scioto, is to come the Land for our Line [o]f the [l]ate Army — The impeachment of Hastings and the Troubles in Ho[lland] seems to be the principal Euro[pe]an news — The Hollanders appear to be fairly engaged [in . . . ] I apprehend threatens them with a fatal interference of th[e] surrounding Kingly powers; who no doubt will be glad of an opportunity to destroy a government ever hateful to Kings.

Our federal Convention is yet, and will probably continue to be some time longer engaged in the great business that collected them — It seems probable that they will propose a government of much more Tone than that which at present attempts to rule the Confederacy.

A small time before I left home, the want of Wine induced me to venture on one of your Quarter Casks at Stratford, and as I was in possession of your terms, to be sure I am at mercy — But I have perfect reliance that you will settle the matter justly — After fining it, I bottled it carefully and e[xactly]<sup>1</sup> five [gallo]ns<sup>1</sup> & 2 bottles came from the Cask. These . . .<sup>2</sup> the States of N. Hampshire, Massachusetts and [Mary]land have all sent Congress their Acts . . . T[reaty] of Peace with G. Britain . . .<sup>3</sup> my love to all the Northern Girls.

I am my dear brother.

<sup>1</sup> Almost illegible.

<sup>2</sup> Nine lines inserted here are illegible.

<sup>3</sup> Five lines occur here, one half of which are erased.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO — — — 1

NEW YORK August 22<sup>d</sup> 1787

MY DEAR SIR,

I thank you for the information that thro my brother I have received from you of the health of my family — but my satisfaction was much allayed by the account of your fathers illness. I hope however that on your return from London you may have it in your power to relieve us by intelligence of his recovery —

In my last letter to your brother of Stratford I mentioned a request to you that I will here repeat, least that letter should not have reached him before you left Westmoreland — I requested him to inform you that when my first quarter ended, which would be on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September, I should, thro you, forward my account to the Treasurer of that quarters wages, with an account also, of what should be due at the close of the federal year in November, which will be about £ 112. our currency — And requesting that you would be so good as make provision for making me a remittance of that sum when you should receive my accounts aforesaid. This, I think was the plan proposed to me by the Treasurer before I left Virginia —

Since the affair of M<sup>r</sup> Morris's protests, I apprehend that it will not be easy to get Cash here for bills on Virginia — And therefore it was that I requested the favor of you to contrive a remittance to me here — and I suggested the probability of being supplied with a good bill on this City by Murray & C<sup>o</sup> in Alexandria the half of which house resides in this Town — But this I leave to your judgement, observing always that a draft payable here will suit me better than on Philadelphia, and the fewer days sight the better —

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Haverford College, Charles Roberts Autograph Collection, 723. To a relative in Virginia.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

How did the Crops appear when you left Westmoreland, or have we, in the Northern Neck been favored with any of the plentiful rains that have refreshed this part of the world? —

You will see all the news that we have, retailed in the public papers, so that I need not trouble you with that — For four or 5 weeks after my first arrival here we were fully employed with business in Congress — for a few days past a cessation has taken place by the sickness of some members, the inattention of others, and by some going to the Convention — In a few days we expect 8 or 9 States — The Report of the Convention is expected in Congress about a fortnight hence, and great are the public expectations concerning it — Tis expected that a federal Legislature of 3 branches will be recommended, with independent powers, and supreme for external matters, Revenue, & Commerce — with an Executive well toned and of reasonable duration — I wish you every happiness and am very sincerely your affectionate friend and Kinsman.

TO [JOHN ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK September the 5th 1787

DEAR SIR.

Since my letter to you of December 1785 from Chantilly in Virginia, in answer to the letters that you were pleased to write me on the 26th of August, 6th & 7th of September 1785, I have not been honored with any letter from you — On my arrival here I met with and read with great pleasure your book on American governments — The judicious collection you have made, with your just reflections thereon, have

<sup>1</sup> Adams Papers. Copy from the original furnished through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

reached America at a great crisis, and will probably have their influence in forming the federal government now under consideration. Your labor may therefore have its reward in the thanks of this and future generations. The present federal system however well calculated it might have been for its designed ends of the States, had they done their duty, under the almost total neglect of that duty, has been found quite inefficient, and ineffectual. The government must be both legislative and Executive, with the former paramount to the State Legislatures in certain essentials to federal purposes. I think that there is no doubt that this Legislation will be recommended to consist of the triple ballance if I may use the expression to signify a compound of the simple forms acting independently, but forming a joint determination. The executive (which will be part of the legislative) to have more duration & power enlarged beyond the present. This seems to be the present plan expected and generally spoken of—I say expected, because the Convention is yet sitting, and will continue so to do untill the middle of this month. I was appointed to that assembly, but being a Member of Congress where the plan of Convention must be approved, there appeared an inconsistency for Members of the former to have Session with the latter, and so pass judgment at New York upon their opinion at Philadelphia. I therefore declined going to Convention and came here; where we lately have contracted for the sale of six millions of Acres on the N. W. side of Ohio in the ceded territory, for lessening the domestic debt. And now another offer is made for two millions more. I hope we shall at least be able to extinguish the domestic debt created by the late war, which is by far the greatest part of the debt. So many of our Members have lately gone from home to the Convention, that we

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

have had but five States in Congress for a month past, which has prevented any determination on your application to return. It seems at present very doubtful whether there will be any Resident appointed to the Court where you are—Some being for a Minister, some for a Chargé, and some for neither—but a Consul only—How it will terminate can scarcely be conjectured yet. Permit me now Sir to entreat your attention, and good offices in the following affair—Mr Thomas Steptoe, concerning whom I formerly wrote to you, dyed on shipboard as he was returning home from the East Indies either in 1784 or 1785, and we are not certain whether he was in a Danish or Sweedish Ship; but it was one of these. Captain Miller who gave me this intelligence by letter and who is now at the Baltic, was not certain to which of these nations the Ship belonged. but he said it was supposed that Mr. Steptoe had a considerable property. His heirs in Virginia having heard nothing concerning this property, apprehend that it has been secured by the officers of the Ship wherein he dyed. The want of exact information concerning Mr. Steptoe's affairs will render it difficult to procure redress—Perhaps a proper enquiry among those people in London who trade with the East Indies may furnish some light upon the business. Or an application to the Danish & Sweedish Ministers at the Court of London, might cause an enquiry to be made in their respective countries, so as that the holders of his property fearing detection may come forward and honestly deliver up this gentleman's effects—and inform if he left any Will—It is not improbable that he left a Will somewhere which if procured would regulate the descent of his Virginia estate—I shall be singularly obliged to you my dear Sir, if you will interest yourself in this business, and let me know the success of your enquiries

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

My compliments if you please to Col- Smith, and affectionate regards to my nephew Shippen. With every sentiment of esteem and friendship

I am dear Sir, sincerely yours.

TO RICHARD LEE<sup>1</sup>

NEW-YORK, Sept<sup>r</sup> 13, 1787

DEAR SIR,

Altho you have favored me with three letters you do not in any of them acknowledge the receipt of a letter from me that I wrote to you many weeks ago. I thank you nevertheless for the intelligence you gave me, especially that which relates to the welfare of my family—The bad crops in consequence of the drought comes very hard upon us when pressed so heavily with other burthens—Those evils which happen independently of us, we must bear with manly firmness; and those which flow from our own misconduct we have no right to complain of. Among the last is the pressure of private debt, which almost universally arises from idleness and extravagance; one or both—This will be corrected & remedied by industry & economy—The debts created by a war forced upon us, and by which we have secured the blessings of liberty, we ought to pay without murmuring—Congress is endeavoring to lighten the public burthens by selling the federal lands beyond the Ohio to pay the domestic debt which forms so great a part of our whole debt—We have already contracted for the sale of 6 millions of acres, and a proposition is now on the Table to purchase three millions more. We hear a

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection, 1771-1791. Of "Lee Hall" in Westmoreland County, Virginia.



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talk of a plan forming to purchase 20, Millions more — These lands will all be sold for discharging the principal of the debt, and the public securities paid in by installments — These bargains once made will sink in season a large part of the debt.

The friends to American honor & happiness here all join in lamenting the riots and mobbish proceedings in Virginia — They say it will injure the American name & character thro the world — And the wonder is that all good men in the country dont unite to suppress such evil doings, and punish the offenders — We are deeply concerned for the honor & reputation of Westmoreland that our records should be stolen and the strongest efforts not be made to find out & punish the Thief — A public purse should directly be made up by the good men of the County, and a large reward offered for discovering the offender — The Magistrates of New Kent soon found out Price Posey & sent him in chains to Richmond to be tried for his life — Col<sup>o</sup> H. Lee & myself will pay our guineas apiece towards making up this purse —

The public papers make it quite probable that a general war in Europe will attend the civil war in Holland — This will not hurt us if we are wise enough to keep out of the scrape — The federal Convention will rise this week — Good powdered Bark sells here from 12 to 14 / a pound — Nutmegs very scarce & dear being 8 / an ounce & other spices in proportion — When you consider this, and also that we are obliged to meet all our expenses with ready money ; you will see the necessity of remitting me Cash for the purpose of buying the things you want, for indeed I have it not of my own — My compliments, if you please to the Ladies of Lee Hall, & to all friends in Westmoreland —

I am dear Sir your affectionate  
friend & Kinsman.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GEORGE MASON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, October 1st, 1787

DEAR SIR,

I have waited until now to answer your favor of September 10th from Philadelphia, that I might inform you how the Convention plan of government was entertained by Congress. Your prediction of what would happen in Congress was exactly verified. It was with us, as with you, this or nothing; and this urged with a most extreme intemperance. The greatness of the powers given, and the multitude of places to be created produce a coalition of monarchy men, military men, aristocrats and drones, whose noise, impudence and zeal exceeds all belief. Whilst the commercial plunder of the South stimulates the rapacious trader. In this state of things the patriot voice is raised in vain for such changes and securities as reason and experience prove to be necessary against the encroachments of power upon the indispensable rights of human nature. Upon due consideration of the Constitution under which we now act, some of us were clearly of opinion that the Thirteenth Article of the Confederation precluded us from giving an opinion concerning a plan subversive of the present system, and eventually forming a new Confederacy of nine instead of thirteen States. The contrary doctrine was asserted with great violence in expectation of the strong majority with which they might send it forward under terms of much approbation. Having procured an opinion that Congress was qualified to consider, to amend, to approve or disapprove, the next game was to determine that though a right to amend existed, it would be highly inexpedient

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in Kate Mason Rowland, *The Life of George Mason*, II. 185. A manuscript copy is among the Lee Transcripts of the Virginia Historical Society.

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to exercise that right, but merely to transmit it with respectful marks of approbation. In this state of things I availed myself of the right to amend, and moved the amendments, a copy of which I send herewith, and called the ayes and nays to fix them on the journal. This greatly alarmed the majority and vexed them extremely; for the plan is to push the business on with great dispatch, and with as little opposition as possible, that it may be adopted before it has stood the test of reflection and due examination. They found it most eligible at last to transmit it merely, without approving or disapproving, provided nothing but the transmission should appear on the journal. This compromise was settled and they took the opportunity of inserting the word *unanimously*, which applies only to simple transmission, hoping to have it mistaken for an unanimous approbation of the thing. It states that Congress having received the Constitution unanimously transmit it, &c. It is certain that no approbation was given. This Constitution has a great many excellent regulations in it, and if it could be reasonably amended would be a fine system. As it is, I think 'tis past doubt, that if it should be established, either a tyranny will result from it, or it will be prevented by a civil war. I am clearly of opinion with you that it should be sent back with amendments reasonable, and assent to it withheld until such amendments are admitted. You are well acquainted with Mr. Stone and others of influence in Maryland. I think it will be a great point to get Maryland and Virginia to join in the plan of amendments and return it with them. If you are in correspondence with our chancellor Pendleton it will be of much use to furnish him with the objections, and if he approves our plan, his opinion will have great weight with our Convention; and I am told that his relation Judge Pendleton of South Carolina has de-

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cided weight in that State, and that he is sensible and independent. How important will it be then to procure his union with our plan, which might probably be the case if our chancellor was to write largely and pressing to him on the subject, that if possible it may be amended there also. It is certainly the most rash and violent proceeding in the world to cram thus suddenly into men a business of such infinite moment to the happiness of millions. One of your letters will go by the packet and one by a merchant ship.

My compliments, if you please, to your lady and to the young ladies and gentlemen.

I am, dear sir, affectionately yours.

Suppose when the Assembly recommended a Convention to consider this new Constitution they were to use some words like these: It is earnestly recommended to the good people of Virginia to send their most wise and honest men to this Convention that it may undergo the most intense consideration before a plan shall be without amendments adopted that admits of abuses being practised by which the best interests of this country may be injured, and civil liberty greatly endangered. This might perhaps give a decided tone to the business.

Please to send my son Ludwell a copy of the amendments proposed by me to the new Constitution sent herewith.

TO DOCTOR WILLIAM SHIPPEN, JR.<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October 2<sup>d</sup> 1787

MY DEAR SIR

I thank you very sincerely for your last letter and its enclosures which are now returned. It is indeed

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collections.

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a great addition to my happiness to know that my dearest Nephew is so pleasingly and improvingly placed — for I have not a doubt but that he will make the best use of his situation which being so well contrived to delight the Mind, must necessar[il]y render its improvement more certain.

I am much obliged by your assurance that you will have the small pox directions ready for me. I desired my friend Starr to have the Boots ready for me against my return to Phil<sup>a</sup> on the 6<sup>th</sup> of next Month in my way home — But upon further consideration, I shall want the Boots here to travel in to Phil<sup>a</sup> as the Season will be cool — Will you be so kind as tell him this, and that I desire he will have them made immediately with a pair of proper bootstraps fitted to them, so that you or he may take the opportunity of some safe and friendly person coming here who may bring them to me before the 3<sup>d</sup> of November, or as soon after this as possible, that I may not be disappointed.

I have considered the new Constitution will [with] all the attention and candor that the thing and the times render necessary, & I find it impossible for me to doubt, that in its present State, unamended, the adoption of it will put Civil Liberty and the happiness of the people at the mercy of Rulers who may possess the great unguarded powers given — And I assure you that confidence in the moderation or benignity of power is not a plant of quick growth in a reflecting bosom — The necessary alterations will by no means interfere with the general nature of the plan, or limit the power of doing good ; but they will restrain from oppression the wicked & tyrannic — If all men were wise and good there would be no necessity for government or law — But the folly & the vice of human nature renders government & laws necessary for the Many, and restraints indispensable to prevent oppression from those who are entrusted with



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the administration of one & the dispensation of the other — You will see herewith the amendments<sup>1</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> Lee's autograph draft of the proposed amendments to the Federal Constitution, found in the Shippen Collection, is as follows :

“It having been found from universal experience that the most express declarations and reservations are necessary to protect the just rights and liberty of Mankind from the silent, powerful, and ever active conspiracy of those who govern, and it appearing to be the sense of the good people of America by the various Bills or declarations of Rights whereon the Governments of the greater number of the States are founded, that such precautions are necessary to restrain and regulate the exercise of the great powers necessarily given to Rulers — In conformity with these principles and from respect for the public

submitted

sentiment on this subject it is ~~proposed~~ — That the new Constitution proposed for the government of the U. States be bottomed upon a declaration or Bill of Rights, clearly and precisely stating the principles upon which this Social Compact is founded, to wit; That the rights of Conscience in matters of Religion shall not be violated — That the freedom of the Press shall be secured — That the Trial by Jury in Criminal and Civil cases, and the modes prescribed by the Common law for safety of life in Criminal prosecutions shall be held sacred — That standing Armies in times of peace are dangerous to liberty and ought not to be permitted unless assented to by two thirds of the Members composing each house of Legislature under the new Constitution. That Elections should be free and frequent — That the right administration of justice should be secured by the freedom and independency of the Judges — That excessive Bail, excessive Fines, or cruel and unusual punishments should not be demanded or inflicted — That the right of the people to assemble peaceably for the purpose of petitioning the Legislature shall not be prevented — That the Citizens shall not be exposed to unreasonable searches, seizure of their persons, houses, papers, or property.

And as it is necessary for the good of Society that the administration of government be conducted with all possible maturity of judgment; for which reason it hath been the practice of civilized nations, and so determined by every State in this Union, that a Council of States or Privy Council should be appointed to advise and assist in the arduous business assigned to the Executive power — Therefore, let the new Constitution be so amended as to admit the appointment of a Privy Council to consist of eleven Members chosen by the President, but responsible for the advice they may give — for which purpose the



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appeared to me necessary, they are submitted to you and my Excellent old friend at German Town — Perhaps they may be submitted to the world at large. My good old friend has made himself better ac-

advice given shall be entered in a Council book and signed by the Giver in all affairs of great concern. And that the Counsellors act under an Oath of Office. In order to prevent the dangerous blending of the Legislative and Executive powers, and to secure Responsibility — the Privy Council and not the Senate shall be joined with the President in the appointment of all Officers civil and military under the new Constitution. That the Constitution be so altered as to Omit the creation of a Vice President, whose duties as assigned by the Constitution, may be dischar[g]ed by the Privy Council (except in the instance of presiding in the Senate, which may be supplied by a speaker chosen from the body of Senators by themselves as usual) and thus to avoid the establishment of a great Officer of State who is sometimes to be joined with the Legislature, and sometimes to administer the Government, rendering Responsibility difficult; besides giving unjust and needless preeminence to that State from whence this Officer may come.

That such parts of the new Constitution be amended as provide imperfectly for the trial of Criminals by a Jury of the Vicinage, and to supply the omission of a Jury trial in Civil causes or disputes about property between individuals, whereby the Common Law it is directed, and as generally it is secured by the several State Constitutions. — That such parts of the new Constitution be amended as permit the vexatious and oppressive calling of Citizens from their own Country in all cases of controversy concerning property between Citizens of different States, and between Citizens and Foreigners; to be tried in a far distant Court, and as it may be without a Jury. Whereby in a multitude of cases, the circumstances of distance

and expence, may compel <sup>numbers</sup> ~~men~~ to submit to the most unjust and illfounded demands. — That in order to secure the rights of the people more effectually from violation, the power and respectability of the House of Representatives be increased, by increasing the number of Delegates to that House where the Democratic interest must chiefly depend for protection — That the Constitution be so amended as to increase the number of votes necessary for making Laws, where a bare

<sup>now declared</sup> majority is ~~made~~ sufficient; altho the choice of a President is required to be made by a greater number in cases where the Delegates are to choose that Officer — Yet surely it is as necessary to guard

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quainted with Hippocrates than with Plato, and relying upon the goodness of his own heart, with<sup>t</sup> reflecting upon the corrupting & encroaching<sup>1</sup> nature of power, he is willing to trust to its fangs more than experience justifies — The malady of human nature in these States now, seems to be as it was in the years 1778 & 1779 with respect to the effect produced by a certain Combination — the Malady that I mean is a temporary Insanity — I wish that the present may subside with as little public injury as it formerly did, altho that was not small in all its branches. Give my love where it is due, and be assured that I am unalterably yours.

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]<sup>2</sup>

NEW YORK October 5<sup>th</sup> 1787

Having long toiled with you my dear friend in the Vineyard of liberty, I do with great pleasure submit to your wisdom and patriotism, the objections that prevail in my mind against the new Constitution proposed for federal goverment — which objections I did propose to Congress in form of amendments to be discussed, and that such as were approved might be forwarded to the States with the Convention system. You will have been informed by other hands why these amendments were not considered and do not appear on the Journal, and the reasons that influenced a bare *transmission* of

against injurious Laws being made, as it is to prevent an improper President from being chosen.”

Besides this draft there is another autograph draft in the Samuel Adams Papers in the Lenox Library. The latter was sent to Adams probably in the letter of October 5, 1787.

<sup>1</sup>The words “& encroaching” are inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup>A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 74.

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the Convention plan, without a syllable of approbation or disapprobation on the part of Congress. I suppose my dear Sir, that the good people of the U. States in their late generous contest, contended for free government in the fullest, clearest, and strongest sense. That they had no idea of being brought under despotic rule under the notion of "Strong government," or in form of *elective despotism*: Chains being still Chains, whether made of gold or iron.

The corrupting nature of power, and its insatiable appetite for increase, hath proved the necessity, and procured the adoption of the strongest and most express declarations of that *Residuum* of natural rights, which is not intended to be given up to Society; and which indeed is not necessary to be given for any good social purpose. In a government therefore, when the power of judging what shall be for the *general welfare*, which goes to every object of human legislation; and where the laws of such Judges shall be the *supreme Law of the Land*: it seems to be of the last consequence to declare in most explicit terms the reservations above alluded to. So much for the propriety of a Bill of Rights as a necessary bottom to this new system — It is in vain to say that the defects in this new Constitution may be remedied by the Legislature created by it. The remedy, as it may, so it may not be applied — And if it should a subsequent Assembly may repeal the Acts of its predecessor for the parliamentary doctrine is 'quod leges posteriores priores contrarias abrogant' 4 Ins.<sup>t</sup> 43. Surely this is not a ground upon which a wise and good man would choose to rest the dearest rights of human nature. Indeed, some capital defects are not within the compass of legislative redress — The Oligarchic tendency from the combination of President, V. President, & Senate, is a ruin not within legislative remedy. Nor is the partial right of voting in the Senate, or the de-

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fective numbers in the house of Representatives. It is of little consequence to say that the numbers in the last mentioned Assembly will increase with the population of these States, because what may happen in twenty five or 27 years hence is poor alleviation of the evil, that the immediate time is big with ; for it often happens that abuse under the name of Use is rivetted upon Mankind. Nor can a good reason be assigned for establishing a bad, instead of a good government, in the first instance, because time may amend the bad — Men do not choose to be sick because it may happen that physic may cure them — Suppose that good men came first to the administration of this government ; and that they should see, or thing [sic] they see, a necessity for trying criminally a Man without giving him his Jury of the Vicinage ; or that the freedom of the Press should be restrained because it disturbed the operations of the new government — the mutilation of the jury trial, and the restraint of the press would then follow for good purposes as it should seem, and by good men — But these precedents will be followed by bad men to sacrifice honest and innocent men ; and to suppress the exertions of the Press for wicked and tyrannic purposes — it being certainly true that ‘ *Omnia mala exempla ex bonis orta sunt : sed ubi imperium ad ignaros aut minus bonos pervenit, novum illud exemplum ab dignis et idoneis ad indignos et non idoneos fertur.* ’ In proof of this, we know that the wise and good Lord Holt, to support King William and Revolution principles, produced doctrines in a case of Libel (King against Bear) subversive both of law and sound sense ; which his successor Lord Mansfield (in the case of Woodfall) would have availed himself of for the restraint of the Press and the ruin of liberty. It would appear therefore, that the consideration of human perversity renders it necessary for human safety that in the



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first place, power not requisite should not be given, and in the next place that necessary powers should be carefully guarded. How far this is done in the New Constitution I submit to your wise and attentive consideration. Whether, for the present, it may not be sufficient so to alter the Confederation as to allow Congress full liberty to make Treaties by removing the restraining clauses ; by giving the Impost for a limited time, and the power of Regulating trade ; is a question that deserves to be considered.

But I think the new Constitution (properly amended) as it contains many good regulations, may be admitted— And why not such indispensable amendments be proposed by the Conventions and returned With the new plan to Congress that a new general Convention may so weave them into the proffer'd system as that a Web may be produced fit for freemen to wear? If such amendments were proposed by a Capital state or two, & a willingness expressed to agree with the plan so amended ; I cannot see why it may not be affected. It is a mere begging the question to suppose, as some do, that only this moment and this measure will do. But, Why so, there being no war external or internal to prevent due deliberation on this momentous business — The public papers will inform you what violence has been practised by the Agitators of this new System in Philadelphia to drive on to its immediate adoption as if the subject of Government were a business of passion, instead of cool, sober, and intense consideration. I shall not leave this place before the 4<sup>th</sup> of November — in the mean time I shall be happy to hear from you — My best compliments are presented to M<sup>rs</sup>. Adams, and I pray to be remembered to Gen. Warren, M<sup>r</sup>. Lovell & the good Doctor Holten when you see him. I am, with sentiments of the truest esteem & regard dear Sir your affectionate friend.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK Octob<sup>r</sup> 11. 1787

DEAR SIR,

I was unwilling to interrupt your attention to more important affairs at Phil<sup>a</sup> by sending there an acknowledgement of the letter that you were pleased to honor me with from that City; especially as this place afforded nothing worthy of your notice. We have the pleasure to see the first Act of Congress for selling federal lands N.W of Ohio becoming productive very fast—A large sum of public securities being already paid in upon the first sales: and a new Contract is ordered to be made with a company in N. Jersey for the lands between the two Miamis that will rid us of at least 2 millions more of the public debt. There is good reason to suppose that by the next spring we shall have reduced the domestic debt near six millions of dollars.

And it seems clear that the lands yet to be disposed of, if well managed, will sink the whole 30 Millions that are due. The assiduity with which the Court of London is soliciting that of Spain for the conclusion of a Commercial treaty between those powers, renders it a signal misfortune that we have not been able to get a sufficient number of the States together to produce a conclusion of the Spanish Treaty. The state of Europe, with respect to the continuance of peace, still hangs in doubtful ballance. The finance weakness of France and G. Britain most strongly opposes war, yet the state of things is such as renders it very questionable, whether even that difficulty, great as it is, will secure the conti[nu]ance of peace—It is under the strongest impressions of your goodness and candor

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXXI. 222.

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that I venture to make the observations that follow in this letter, assuring you that I feel it among the first distresses that have happened to me in my life, that I find myself compelled by irresistible conviction of mind to doubt about the new System for federal government recommended by the late Convention.

It is Sir, in consequence of long reflection upon the nature of Man and of government, that I am led to fear the danger that will ensue to Civil Liberty from the adoption of the new system in its present form. I am fully sensible of the propriety of change in the present plan of confederation, and 'altho there may be difficulties, not inconsiderable, in procuring an adoption of such amendments to the Convention System as will give security to the just rights of human nature, and better secure from injury the discordant interests of the different parts of this Union ; yet I hope that these difficulties are not insurmountable. Because we are happily uninterrupted by external war, or by such internal discords as can prevent peaceable and fair discussion, in another Convention, of those<sup>1</sup> objections that are fundamentally strong against the new Constitution which abounds with useful regulations. As there is so great a part of the business well done already, I think that such alterations as must give very general content, could not long employ another Convention when provided with the sense of the different States upon those alterations.

I am much inclined to believe that the amendments generally thought to be necessary, will be found to be of such a nature, as tho they do not oppose the exercise of a very competent federal power ; are yet such as the best Theories on Government, and the best practise upon those theories have found necessary. At the same time that they are such as the opinions of

<sup>1</sup> The word "difficulties" is here erased.

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our people have for ages been fixed on. It would be unnecessary for me here to enumerate particulars as I expect the honor of waiting on you at Mount Vernon in my way home early in November. In the meantime I have only to request that my best respects may be presented to your Lady and that I may be remembered to the rest of the good family of Mount Vernon.

I have the honor to be dear Sir, with the most unfeigned respect, esteem, and affection, Your most obedient and very humble Servant,

If the next Packets should bring us any important advices from Europe I will communicate them to you immediately —

TO [THE] GOVERNOR [OF VIRGINIA]

[EDMUND] RANDOLPH<sup>1</sup>

NEW-YORK, Oct. 16th, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I was duly honoured with your favour of September 17th, from Philadelphia, which should have been acknowledged long before now, if the nature of the business it related to had not required time. The establishment of the new plan of government, in its present form, is a question that involves such immense consequences, to the present times and to posterity, that it calls for the deepest attention of the best and wisest friends of their country and mankind. If it be found right, after mature deliberation, adopt it; if wrong, amend it at all events: for to say that a bad government must be established for fear of anarchy, is really saying that we should kill ourselves for fear of dying! Experience, and the actual state of things, show that there is no difficulty in procuring a general con-

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 78.

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vention, the late one having been collected without any obstruction ; nor does external war, or internal discord, prevent the most cool, collected, full, and fair discussion of this all-important subject. If, with infinite ease, a convention was obtained to prepare a system, why may not another convention, with equal ease, be obtained to make proper and necessary amendments? Good government is not the work of short time, or of sudden thought. From Moses to Montesquieu the greatest geniuses have been employed on this difficult subject, and yet experience has shown capital defects in the systems produced for the government of mankind. But since it is neither prudent nor easy to make frequent changes in government, and as bad governments have been generally found the most fixed, so it becomes of the last importance to frame the first establishment upon grounds the most unexceptionable, and such as the best theories with experience justify ; not trusting, as our new constitution does, and as many approve of doing, to time and future events to correct errors that both reason and experience, in similar cases, now prove to exist in the new system. It has hitherto been supposed a fundamental truth that, in governments rightly balanced, the different branches of legislature should be unconnected, and that the legislative and executive powers should be separate. In the new constitution, the president and senate have all the executive and two-thirds of the legislative ; and in some weighty instances (as making all kinds of treaties which are to be the laws of the land) they have the whole legislative and executive powers. They jointly appoint all officers, civil and military, and they (the senate) try all impeachments, either of their own members or of the officers appointed by themselves. Is there not a most formidable combination of power thus created in a few ? and can the most critical eye, if a candid one,



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discover responsibility in this potent corps? or will any sensible man say that great power, without responsibility, can be given to rulers with safety to liberty? It is most clear that the parade of impeachment is nothing to them, or any of them, as little restraint is to be found, I presume, from the fear of offending constituents.

The president is of four years duration, and Virginia (for example) has one vote, out of thirteen, in the choice of him. The senate is a body of six years duration, and as, in the choice of president, the largest state has but a thirteenth part, so is it in the choice of senators; and this thirteenth vote, not of the people, but of electors, two removes from the people. This latter statement is adduced to show that responsibility is as little to be apprehended from amenability to constituents, as from the terror of impeachment. You are, therefore, sir, well warranted in saying that either a monarchy or aristocracy will be generated: perhaps the most grievous system of government may arise! It cannot be denied, with truth, that this new constitution is, in its first principles, most highly and dangerously oligarchic; and it is a point agreed that a government of the few is, of all governments, the worst. The only check to be found in favour of the democratic principle, in this system, is the House of Representatives, which, I believe, may justly be called a mere shred or rag of representation, it being obvious, to the least examination, that smallness of number, and great comparative disparity of power, renders that house of little effect to promote good, or restrain bad government. But what is the power given to this ill-constructed body? To judge of what may be for the *general welfare*, and such judgment, when made that of Congress, is to be *the supreme law of the land*. This seems to be a power co-extensive with every possible



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object of human legislation. Yet there is no restraint, in form of a bill of rights, to secure (what Dr. Blackstone calls) that residuum of human rights which is not meant to be given up to society, and which, indeed, is not necessary to be given for any good social purpose. The rights of conscience, the freedom of the press, and the trial by jury, are at mercy. It is, indeed, stated that, in criminal cases, the trial shall be by jury; but how? in the state? What then becomes of the jury of the vicinage, or, at least, from the county in the first instance; for the states being from fifty to seven hundred miles in extent, this mode of trial, even in criminal cases, may be greatly impaired; and in civil cases the inference is strong, that it may be altogether omitted, as the constitution positively assumes it in criminal, and is silent about it in civil causes. Nay, it is more strongly discountenanced in civil cases, by giving the supreme court, in case of appeal, jurisdiction, both as to law and fact. Judge Blackstone, in his learned commentaries, (article Jury Trial,) says, it is the most transcendant privilege which any subject can enjoy, or wish for, that he cannot be affected either in his property, his liberty, or his person, but by the unanimous consent of twelve of his neighbours and equals. A constitution, that I may venture to affirm, has, under providence, secured the just liberties of this nation for a long succession of ages; the impartial administration of justice, which secures both our persons and our properties, is the great end of civil society. But if that be entirely trusted to the magistracy, a select body of men, and those generally selected by the prince, *or such as enjoy the highest offices of the state*, their decisions, in spite of their own natural integrity, will have frequently an involuntary bias towards those of their own rank and dignity. It is not to be expected, from human nature, that the *few* should be

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always attentive to the good of the many. The learned judge further says, that "every new tribunal, erected for the decision of *facts*, is a step towards establishing aristocracy, the most oppressive of all governments." The answer to these objections is, that the new legislature may provide remedies! But as they may, so they may not, and if they did, a succeeding assembly may repeal the provisions. The evil is found resting upon constitutional bottom, and the remedy upon the mutable ground of legislation, revocable at every annual meeting. It is the more unfortunate that this great security of human rights, the trial by jury, should be weakened in this system, as power is unnecessarily given, in the second section of the third article, to call people from their own country, in all cases of controversy about property between citizens of different states and foreigners, to be tried in a distant court where the Congress may sit; for although inferior congressional courts *may*, for the above purpose, be instituted in the different states, yet this is a matter altogether in the pleasure of the new legislature; so that if they please not to institute them, or if they do not regulate the right of appeal, the people will be exposed to endless oppression, and the necessity of submitting to pay unjust demands rather than follow suitors, through great expense, to far distant tribunals, and to be determined upon there, as it may be, without a jury. In this congressional legislature a bare majority can enact commercial laws, so that the representatives of the seven northern states, as they will have a majority, can, by law, create the most oppressive monopolies upon the five southern states, whose circumstances and productions are essentially different from theirs, although not a single man of their voters are the representatives of, or amenable to, the people of the southern states. Can such a set of men be, with the

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least colour of truth, called representatives of those they make laws for? It is supposed that the policy of the northern states will prevent such abuses! but how feeble, sir, is *policy* when opposed to interest among trading people, and what is the restraint arising from policy? It is said that we may be forced, by abuse, to become ship-builders; but how long will it be before a people of agriculture can produce ships sufficient to export such bulky and such extensive commodities as ours; and if we had the ships, from whence are the seamen to come? four thousand of whom, at least, we shall want in Virginia. In questions so liable to abuses, why was not the necessary vote put to two-thirds of the members of the legislature? Upon the whole, sir, my opinion is, that, as this constitution abounds with useful regulations, at the same time that it is liable to strong and fundamental objections, the plan for us to pursue will be to propose the necessary amendments, and express our willingness to adopt it with the amendments; and to suggest the calling a new convention for the purpose of considering them. To this I see no well-founded objection, but great safety and much good to be the probable result. I am perfectly satisfied that you make such use of this letter as you shall think to be for the public good. And now, after begging your pardon for so great a trespass on your patience, and presenting my best respects to your lady, I will conclude with assuring you that

I am, with the sincerest esteem and regard,  
dear sir,

Your most affectionate and obedient servant,

His Excellency,  
Gov. RANDOLPH.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK October the 27. 1787

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Our mutual friend M<sup>r</sup> Gerry furnishes me with an opportunity of writing to you without danger of my letter being stopt on its passage, as I have some reason to apprehend has been the case with letters written by me and sent by Post — Under this impression it is, that I send you herewith a Copy of my letter to you of the 5<sup>th</sup> of this month. Major Sergeant delivered me the letter that you were pleased to write me on the 8<sup>th</sup> instant, by which I see that you supposed me to have been a Member of the late Convention. I did early decline being a Member of that Body, because I was a member of Congress and the proposed plan stated, that Congress should review [sic], & if they approved, transmit the proposed *amendments to the Confederation*, (for that was the Idea, and indeed the only idea that the proposed federal plan admits of, or that the powers delegated to the Convention countenanced) to the 13 States for approbation and ratification. In this view of the business, it appeared to me an inconsistency that the same Men should in N. York review their own doings at Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> And this opinion was fully verified when the Members of Convention came to Congress in such numbers with their own plan, that the Votes of 3 States were Convention Votes, 2 others divided by Conventioners, and Conventioners mingled with many other States. It is Sir most obvious, that the Constitution proposed by the Con-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 81.

<sup>2</sup> See also p. 434. The reasons assigned by Lee for declining to serve as a member of the Federal Convention would seem to disprove those often alleged to have controlled his action.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

vention could not have a dispassionate and impartial consideration in Congress — And indeed it had not. In my letter to you of the 5<sup>th</sup> instant, I sent you the amendments that I proposed in Congress; if they, with my letter should have miscarried, our friend M<sup>r</sup> Gerry can furnish you with them. M<sup>r</sup> Wilson of Phil<sup>a</sup> has appeared in print with the Convention reasons in support of their proffered plan — How he has succeeded M<sup>r</sup> Gerry will inform you. The Press has produced such Manly and well reasoned refutations of him and his System, that both have lost ground amazingly in the public estimation. His principle Sophism is, that bills of rights were necessary in the State Constitution because every thing not reserved was given to the State Legislatures, but in the Federal government, everything was reserved that was not given to the federal Legislature. This is clearly a distinction without a difference. Because Independent States are in the same relation to each other as Individuals are with respect to uncreated government. So that if reservations were necessary in one case, they are equally necessary in the other. But the futility of this distinction appears from the conduct of the Convention itself, for they have made several reservations — every one of which proves the Rule in Conventional idea, to be, that what was not reserved was given — For example, they have reserved from their Legislature a power to prevent the importation of Slaves for 20 years, and also from Creating Titles. But they have no reservation in favor of the Press, Rights of Conscience, Trial by Jury in Civil cases, or Common Law securities.

As if these were of less importance to the happiness of Mankind than the making of Lords, or the importations of Slaves! The essential defects in the construction of the Legislature, and the dangerous blending of the Legislative and Executive powers, so as to pre-



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vent all Responsibility, are such radical objections, as render this plan inadmissible, in my opinion, without amendments. The Baron Montesquieu says "that the English is the only nation in the world, where political or civil liberty is the direct end of its constitution." I once thought that our free governments were entitled to the same praise. But the System under consideration, seems to have reversed the above idea — The acquisition of power unlimited, not the security of Civil liberty appears to be the object. Arbitrary government is indeed so carefully intrenched and barricaded against democratic influences, that I am very much mistaken if Civil Liberty does not expire under its operation. The friends of just Liberty here are astonished at the Occlusion of the Press in Boston at a season so momentous to Mankind. It is thought to augur ill of the New Government proposed, that on its being first ushered into the world, it should destroy the great Palladium of human rights — And at Boston too, where first the Presses pointed America to resist attempts upon her liberty & rights; there to find the great Organ of free communication stopped, when that was under consideration, which of all sublunary things demands the freest and fullest discussion: Government, upon the goodness or badness of which, almost depends, whether we shall rank among Men or Beasts! When you are pleased to write to me, your letter, by being enclosed to our friend M<sup>r</sup> Osgood of the Treasury here, will be forwarded safely to me in *Virginia*, for which place I shall set out from hence on the 4<sup>th</sup> of next month —

My best respects to your Lady, & I pray to be remember'd to Gen. Warren, M<sup>r</sup> Lovell, & Doct. Holten.

I am dear Sir most sincerely and affectionately your friend.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO WILLIAM A[UGUSTINE] WASHINGTON<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, Nov<sup>r</sup> 17. 1787

DEAR SIR,

I have a bond of the late Col<sup>o</sup> Turners for £82. 10. dated the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1783 which draws interest from that time, and so the interest due thereon on the 4<sup>th</sup> of last July being 4 years, amounts to £16. 10. 0. I am content to let the principal remain in the hands of the Executors for the present. But you will much oblige me by paying the interest if it be possible to my Overseer. If this cannot be done. As I am among the number of those unfortunate persons who have made but one third of a Crop of Corn, I am under the heavy necessity of purchasing one hundred barrels. Therefore, if you cannot now pay the money, if the estate has Corn to sell, we will, if you please conduct the matter thus. The estate of Miss F. Lee at Hallows's Marsh, very convenient to me, has Corn to sell. So that I may be supplied with the value in Corn here of £16. 10. 0 and you may sell as much of Col<sup>o</sup> Turners estates Corn as will pay Miss Lees estate. If this is agreeable to you, we have only to fix the price now of the Market rules to govern both Cases. I can credit this Estate for so much, and you debtor that for the amount of the above interest. Let me have, if you please, an answer by the Bearer. We all here join in best love to you, Lady, & the Children.

Affectionately & Sincerely Yours.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York State Library, Signers of the Declaration of Independence, p. 211. Addressed, "W<sup>m</sup> A. Washington Esq<sup>r</sup> / of / Blenheim // By — / Mr. Geo. Eskridge." Endorsed, "Col<sup>o</sup> Rich<sup>d</sup> H: Lee's / Letter & claim a- / gainst Col<sup>o</sup> Turners / Estate." Washington married Lee's daughter Mary.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO JAMES GORDON, JR.<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, February 26, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

Captain Merry delivered me the letter that you were pleased to write me, on the 11th instant, in which I find you propose the following questions, relative to the new constitution, proposed by the late general convention, and request my answer to them :

First. Whether the United States had not better receive than reject the said constitution ?

Secondly. Whether it would not injure our credit in the European world, if we were to dissent therefrom ; and whether our country would not thereby be endangered, as there are large demands in Europe against us ?

Thirdly. Whether every objection to the plan may not, by instructions from the different states, be made as soon as the said Congress may be assembled ?

Fourthly. Whether ruin would await us, unless we are consolidated in one general plan of government ?

To the first question, namely, "Whether the United States," &c. I answer, that this question implies a *necessity* of either adopting or rejecting. But I know of no power on earth that has, or ever had, a right to propose such a question of extremity to the people, or any part of the people, of the United States. The happiness or misery of mankind depends so essentially upon government, that, when this is to be established by the people for themselves and their posterity, the right of the people cannot be questioned, of so acting with plans proposed, as to adopt them, reject them, or propose amendments to them.

To the second query, "Whether it would not injure," &c. I reply, that this second question is much founded

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 84.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

on the first; and, so far as it is, may receive the same answer. It is divisible into two parts; the first, shall our credit be injured in Europe by *dissenting* from the proposed plan? It is presumable, that credit abroad depends much upon union and happiness at home, as it must always greatly do upon that industry and real strength which grows out of the possession of civil liberty. Those, therefore, who contend for the new plan, by propounding such a question, should prove, in the first place, that the adoption of this constitution will secure union and happiness at home, and those valuable consequences that flow from the possession of civil liberty; and this is the more necessary, as there are such numbers who think that the proffered plan, if admitted without amendments, will empower the administrators of the new government to destroy civil liberty. The second part of this question is, "whether our country will not be endangered by a *dissent*, as there are large demands against us in Europe." I presume that foreigners have no business with the nature of our government. Payment of their debts they are entitled to, but no possible reason can be assigned, why these debts may not as well be paid if the proposed constitution was to be so amended, as to secure the just rights and liberties of the people from violation, by a proper bill of rights; to retain the trial by jury in all cases, civil as well as criminal, as directed by the common law; to secure the rights of conscience, and freedom of the press. Will France, Holland, or Spain, be disturbed at our retaining these valuable privileges? or, will they quarrel with us for so amending this new plan, as to put it out of the power of the new rulers to carry every citizen of the state, by way of appeal, to be tried for every suit for debt, brought by all others than our own state citizens, in the supreme federal court, where distance and expense may ruin multitudes? Have for-



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eigners any thing to do with our amending the proposed constitution, so as to put it out of the power of the rulers under it, to garble elections, by ordering all the elections of any state to be held at any place they shall choose — at Cape Henry, for instance, if they so please at any time. See section fourth, article first, where they have power over time, place, and manner of holding elections for choosing representatives, without restraint or limitation.

To the third query, "Whether every objection," &c. I answer, that the constitution containing these objections, is made by the people of the United States; and the removal of them by the Congress, would only be a common act of legislation, which may be revoked and repealed by every subsequent meeting of the Congress. So that the power of oppressing will be founded on the strong and lasting ground of a constitution made by the people of the United States, and the remedies (if the new rulers should ever please to declare any,) will rest on feeble and changeable acts of a common legislature. Can it be safe or prudent to suffer this? As for instructions, it is to be remarked, that the senators are chosen by the legislature of the states, and the representatives by all the freeholders—to instruct one, and not both branches of the new legislature, would be doing nothing; and to render instructions of use, the general assembly, and the freeholders of the community, must unite. The almost impossibility of procuring such a union from the majority of the United States, is too obvious, not to show the very little dependence that should be put on such instructions. And, after all, the result could only be a legislative and mutable act against a fixed constitution. But how absurd would it be for the people to agree to a constitutional evil to-day, and to-morrow call for a legislative redress of that evil!



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The fourth and last question, "Whether ruin would await us," &c. I am clearly of opinion, that our greater strength, safety, and happiness, depends on our union; but I am as clear that this union had infinitely better be on principles that give security to the just rights and liberties of mankind, than on such principles as permit rulers to destroy them. Thus, sir, I hope that I have fully, and to your satisfaction, answered your several questions: so that you may think yourself warranted, if not bound to be a friend to amendments that should be constitutional. To trust to future events for remedy of evils that we have ourselves once created, is like choosing to be sick, because a doctor may possibly cure us! A very capital defect in this new project is, that the executive and legislative powers are so blended and united, as to remove all chance for responsibility; and to possess man with very great powers, without making him easily answerable for an abuse of these powers, is, in my opinion, neither safe nor wise. I am glad to hear that Colonel Barbour stands for the convention. It is many years ago since I saw his conduct in the legislature, and observed it to be both sensible and honest. I have been obliged to write in haste, so that you may be sure this letter is not intended for the press.

I am, &c.

JAMES GORDON, jun. Esq.

TO ——— 1

CHANTILLY, IN VIRGINIA, April 28th, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—

Your favour of December 3d, in the last year, reached me the last of January following, and it should

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 86.

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have been answered with my thanks long since, if the uncommon badness of the winter, stopping all communication, had not prevented. Your sentiments on the new political structure, are, in my mind, strong and just. Both reason and experience prove, that so extensive a territory as that of the United States, including such a variety of climates, productions, interests; and so great difference of manners, habits, and customs; cannot be governed in freedom—until formed into states, sovereign, *sub modo*, and confederated for the common good. In the latter case, opinion founded on the knowledge of those who govern, procures obedience without force. But remove the opinion, which must fall with a knowledge of characters in so widely extended a country, and force then becomes necessary to secure the purposes of civil government; hence the military array at Kamtschatka, at Petersburg, and through every part of the widely extended Russian empire. Thus force, the parent and the support of tyranny, is demanded for good purposes, although for ever abused to bad ones—that a consolidated, and not a federal government, was the design of *some*, who formed this new project, I have no doubt about. The dazzling ideas of glory, wealth, and power uncontrolled, unfettered by popular opinions, are powerful to captivate the ambitious and the avaricious. With such people, obedience resulting from fear, the offspring of force, is preferable to obedience flowing from esteem and confidence, the legitimate offspring of the knowledge that men have of wisdom and virtue in their governors; and, above all, from the conviction that abuses may be rectified by the substantial checks that political freedom furnish. Massachusetts, I see, has adopted the plan; but proposes to insist perseveringly on amendments. If it were permitted an indi-

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vidual to question so enlightened an assembly, I would ask, why submit to a system requiring such amendments, and trust to creatures of our own creation, for the correcting of evils in it that threaten the destruction of those ends for which the system was formed? The fear of greater evils has been stated: but I cannot help considering such fears as being generated by design upon weakness. The objections to the present system, if accurately considered, will, I believe, be found to grow out of those temporary pressures, created by a long and expensive war, which time and prudence may remove. But, though it were admitted that some amendments to the present confederation would better promote the ends designed by it, why, for that reason, exterminate the present plan, and establish on its ruins another, so replete with power, danger, and hydra-headed mischief? The Massachusetts amendments are good, so far as they go. The first, third, and fourth amendments are well contrived to keep in existence the state sovereignties; and the first particularly proper for securing liberty from the abuse of construction, which the new plan most amply admits of. But why, my dear friend, was the provision in your seventh proposition of amendment, confined to causes between citizens of different states, since the reason applies to suitors of every country, and foreigners will be more apt than our own citizens to abuse, in the way, which, that part of the proffered plan permits, and which this amendment of Massachusetts is designed to prevent? England and Scotland are united for every good purpose of defence and offence, yet a foreigner cannot sue a resident Scotsman in England for debt contracted in Scotland: nor will any foreign nation upon earth grant a similar privilege to our citizens over theirs, of calling their people from their own countries to answer demands against them —

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the fixt idea of all the European nations being, that strangers are not to have privileges in their own country superior to what their own subjects enjoy.

TO GEORGE MASON<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, May 7th, 1788.

DEAR SIR —

Your son delivered me the letter that you were pleased to write me on the 30th instant, and I have promoted his views, as far as it is in my power at present, by directing the tobacco I had intended to sell in the country, to be put on board his vessel. I am inclined to think, for the reasons assigned by him, that the French market will be as good a one, at least, as any that we can send to. Give me leave now, dear sir, to make a few observations on the important business that will call you to Richmond next month. It seems pretty clear at present, that four other states, viz. North Carolina, New-York, Rhode Island, and New-Hampshire, will depend much upon Virginia for their determination on the convention project of a new constitution; therefore it becomes us to be very circumspect and careful about the conduct we pursue, as, on the one hand, every possible exertion of wisdom and firmness should be employed to prevent danger to civil liberty, so, on the other hand, the most watchful precaution should take place to prevent the foes of union, order, and good government, from succeeding so far as to prevent our acceptance of the good part of the plan proposed. I submit to you, sir, whether, to form a consistent union of conduct, it would not be well for six or eight leading friends to amendments to meet privately, and, having formed the best possible

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 88.



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judgment of the members' sentiments from knowledge of the men, to see how far it may be safe to press either for modes of amendment or the extent of amendments, and to govern accordingly. But, certainly, the firmest stand should be made against the very arbitrary mode that has been pursued in some states, that is, to propose a question of absolute rejection or implicit admission. For though it is true that the convention plan looks something like this, yet I think every temperate man must agree that neither the convention, nor any set of men upon earth, have or had a right to insist upon such a question of extremity. To receive the good and reject the bad is too necessary and inherent a right to be parted with. As some subtle managers will be upon the convention, I believe you will find entrapping questions proposed at first as a ground-work of proceeding, which will hamper, confine, and narrow all attempts to proper investigation or necessary amendment, and this will be done under the plausible pretext of losing all by attempting *any* change. I judge that it will be so here, because I observe a similar conduct has been pursued in other places, as in Maryland and Pennsylvania. I trust that such uncandid and dangerous stratagems will be opposed and prevented in the convention of Virginia, and a thorough, particular, and careful examination be first made into all its parts as a previous requisite to the formation of any question upon it. During this process a tolerable judgment may be formed of the sentiments of the generality, and a clue furnished for forming successful propositions for amendment, as the candid friends to this system admit that amendments may be made to improve the plan, but say that these amendments ought to be made, and may be obtained from the new Congress without endangering a total loss of the proposed constitution. I say that those who talk thus, if they are sincere, will not object



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to this plan, which, as I propose it, something like the proceeding of the convention parliament in 1688, in the form of ratification, insert plainly and strongly such amendments as can be agreed upon, and say, that the people of Virginia do claim, demand, and insist upon these as their undoubted rights and liberties which they mean not to part with; and if these are not obtained and secured by the mode pointed out in the fifth article of the convention plan, in two years after the meeting of the new Congress, that Virginia shall, in that case, be considered as disengaged from this ratification. Under this proposition a development will be made of the sincerity of those who advocate the new plan, the beneficial parts of it retained, and a just security given to civil liberty. In the fifth article it is stated that two-thirds of Congress may propose amendments, which, being approved by three-fourths of the legislatures, become parts of the constitution. By this mode, the new Congress may obtain our amendments without risking the convulsion of conventions, and the friends of the plan will be gratified in what they say is necessary; the putting the government in motion, when, as they again say, amendments may and ought to be obtained. By this mode, too, in all probability, the undetermined states may be brought to harmonize, and the formidable minorities, in the assenting states, may be quieted. By this friendly and reasonable accommodation, the perpetual distrust and opposition that will inevitably follow the total adoption of the plan, from the state legislatures, may be happily prevented, and friendly united exertions take place. Much reflection has convinced me that this mode is the best that I have had an opportunity of contemplating. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of recommending it to your serious and patriotic attention; in the formation of these amendments, *localities* ought to be avoided as much as possible. The danger of

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monopolized trade may be prevented by calling for the consent of three-fourths of the United States on regulations of trade. The trial by jury, in this state, to be insisted on, as it [is] used under our present government, and confining the supreme federal court to the jurisdiction of *law* excluding *fact*. The Massachusetts amendments, except the second, and extending the seventh to foreigners as well as citizens of other states, appear to me to be very good, and for their adoption the aid of that powerful state may be secured. The freedom of the press is, by no means, sufficiently attended to by Massachusetts, nor have they remedied the want of responsibility by the impolitic combination of president and senate. It does appear to me, that, in the present temper of America, if the Massachusetts amendments, with those suggested by me, being added, and inserted in our ratification as before stated, we may easily agree, and I verily believe that the most essential good consequences would be the result.

Affectionately yours,

GEORGE MASON, Esq. Gunston Hall.

TO [EDMUND] PENDLETON<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, May 22, 1788.

DEAR SIR —

The manner in which we have together struggled for the just rights of human nature, with the friendly correspondence that we have maintained, entitles us, I hope, to the most unreserved confidence in each other, upon the subject of human rights, and the liberty of our country. It is probable that yourself no more than I do, propose to be hereafter politi-

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 90. A text with variations is printed in the *Virginia Historical Register*, II. 99.

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cally engaged ; neither therefore expecting to gain, or fearing to loose, the candid part of mankind will admit us to be impartial judges, at least of the arduous business that calls you to Richmond, on the second of next month. I do not recollect to have met with a sensible and candid man who has not admitted, that it would be both safer and better if amendments were made to the new constitution, proposed for the government of the United States ; but the friends to the idea of amendments divide about the mode of obtaining them, some thinking that a second convention might do the business, whilst others fear that the attempt to remedy by another convention, would risk the whole. I have been informed that you wished amendments, but disliked the plan of another convention ; the just weight that you have in the councils of your country, may put it in your power, sir, to save from arbitrary rule a great and free people ; I have used the words *arbitrary rule*, because great numbers fear that this will be the case, as it *may* be so under the new proposed system, when they reflect on the unvarying progress of power in the hands of frail man ; to accomplish the ends of society by being equal to contingencies infinite, demands the deposit of power great and extensive indeed, in the hands of rulers, so great as to render abuse probable, unless prevented by the most careful precautions ; among which, the freedom and frequency of elections, the liberty of the press, and the trial by jury, with the independency of the judges, seem to be so capital and essential, that they ought to be secured by a bill of rights, to regulate the discretion of rulers in a legal way, restraining the progress of ambition and avarice within just bounds. Rulers must act by subordinate agents generally, and however the former may be secure from the pursuits of justice, the latter are forever kept in check by the trial by jury, where

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that exists in all its rights. This most excellent security against oppression, is a universal, powerful, and equal protection of all. But the benefit to be derived from this system, is most effectually to be obtained from a well informed and enlightened people ; here arises the necessity for the freedom of the press, which is the happiest organ of communication ever yet devised, the quickest and surest means, of conveying intelligence to the human mind. I am grieved to be forced to think, after the most mature consideration of the constitution proposed, that it leaves the three essential securities above stated, under the mere pleasure of the new rulers ; and why should it do so, sir, since the violation of these cannot be necessary to *good*, but will be always extremely convenient for *bad* government. It is a question deserving intense consideration, whether the state sovereignties ought not to be supported, perhaps in the way proposed by Massachusetts in their first, third, and fourth, amendments. Force and opinion seem to be the two ways alone, by which men can be governed, the latter appears the most proper, for a free people, but remove that, and obedience, I apprehend, can only be found to result from fear, the offspring of force ; if this be so, can opinion exist, without competent knowledge of those who govern, and can that knowledge take place, in a country so extensive as the territory of the United States, which is stated by captain Hutchins at a million of square miles ; whilst the empire of Germany, contains but 192,000, and that of France, but 163,000 square miles, the almost infinite variety of climates, soils, productions, manners, customs, and interests, renders this still more difficult, for the universal government of our legislature ; but very practicable to confederated states, united for mutual safety and happiness, each contributing to the federal head, such



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a part of its sovereignty, as would render the government fully adequate to these purposes, and no more. The people would govern themselves more easily, the laws of each state, being adapted to its own genius and circumstances ; the liberties of the United States would probably be more secure, than under the proposed plan, which, carefully attended to, will be found capable of annihilating the state sovereignties, by the power given to push the operations of their government, under the general legislative right, of commanding taxes without restraint, and seizing the productive revenues that the states may happily fall upon, for their support, and this right, powerfully supported by the congressional court of justice, and by the sacred tye of oath upon all the state judges, will probably prove so strong as to render resistance vain, and the state governments as feeble and contemptible as was the senatorial authority, under the Roman emperors ; the name existed, but the thing was gone. I have observed, sir, that the sensible and candid friends of the proposed plan agree that amendments would be proper, but fear the consequences of another convention. I submit the following as an effectual compromise, between the majorities and formidable minorities, that generally prevail. It seems probable, that the determinations of four states, will be materially influenced by the determination of Virginia, which places a strong obligation on this country, to be unusually cautious and circumspect in her conventional conduct ; the mode proposed is something like that pursued by the convention parliament of England in 1688. In the act of ratification, insert plainly and strongly, such amendments as can be agreed upon, and say, that the people of Virginia do insist upon, and mean to retain them as their undoubted rights and liberties, which they intended not to part



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with, and if these are not obtained and secured by the mode pointed out by the fifth artic[le] of the convention plan, in two years after the meeting of the new congress, that Virginia shall be considered as disengaged from this ratification; in the fifth article it is stated, that two thirds of Congress may propose amendments, which being approved by three fourths of the legislatures, become parts of the constitution; so that the new Congress may obtain the amendment of Virginia, without risking the convulsion of a convention. Thus the beneficial parts of the new system may be retained, and a just security be given for civil liberty, whilst the friends of the system will be gratified, in what they say is necessary, to wit, the putting the government in motion, when, as they again say, amendments may, and ought to be made. The good consequences resulting from this method, will probably be, that the undetermined states may be brought to harmonize, and the formidable minorities in many assenting states, be quieted by so friendly and reasonable an accommodation; and thus the perpetual opposition that will inevitably follow, (the total adoption of the plan) from the state legislatures, may be happily prevented, and united exertions take place. In the formation of these amendments, localities ought to be avoided as much as possible. The danger of monopolized trade may be removed, by calling for the consent of three fourths of the United States, on regulations of commerce. The trial by Jury to be according to the course of proceeding in the state, where the cause criminal or civil is tried, and confining the supreme federal court to the jurisdiction of law, excluding fact. To prevent surprises, and the fixing of injurious laws, it would seem to be prudent to declare against the making laws perpetual, until the experience of two years at least, had vouched their utility; it being much more easy

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to get a good law continued, than a bad one repealed. The amendments of Massachusetts, appear to be good so far as they go, except the second, and extending the seventh to foreigners, as well as the citizens of other states in this union; and for their adoption, the aid of that powerful state may be secured. The freedom of the press, is by no means sufficiently attended to by Massachusetts, nor have they remedied the want of responsibility, by the impolitic combination of president and senate. It does appear to me, that in the present temper of America, if the Massachusetts amendments with those herein suggested being added, and inserted in the form of our ratification as before stated, that Virginia may safely agree, and I believe that the most salutary consequences would ensue. I pray, sir, that God may bless the convention with wisdom, maturity of counsel, and constant care of the public liberty, and that he may have you in his holy keeping. With very great esteem and regard I have the honour to be, dear sir,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

Hon. Mr. CHANCELLOR PENDLETON.

### TO GENERAL JOHN LAMB<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRGINIA, June 27, 1788.

SIR,

It is but this day I received the letter that you did me the honor to write to me on the 18th of May last.

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in I. Q. Leake, *Memoir of the Life and Times of General John Lamb*, 309. Lamb was an officer in the Revolutionary War, the commander at West Point at the time of Arnold's treason, and later a prominent member of the Clinton party in New York. He was at this time chairman of a society opposed to the adoption of the Constitution without amendment which was corresponding with the leaders in several states.

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Repeated experience having shown me that I could not be at Richmond and be in health, prevented me from attempting to be a member of our State Convention; but I have omitted no occasion of enforcing, to the utmost of my power, the propriety of so stating amendments as to secure their adoption, as you will see by the letter I wrote to the president of our Convention, a copy of which I have the honor to enclose to you. I lament that your letter did not reach me sooner, because I think your plan of correspondence would have produced salutary consequences; as it seems to have been the idea of our Assembly when they sent the proposed plan to a convention. Every attempt has failed, either to get previous amendments or effectually to secure the obtaining them hereafter. Yet you will see, sir, that the ratifying majority feel the propriety of amendments; altho', in my judgment, the mode they have pursued, for obtaining them, is neither wise or manly. But if nothing better can be obtained in the states that have not yet ratified, even this mode of expressing the sense of the approving states may operate to the obtaining amendments hereafter, as well as to prevent, in the exercise of power, such abuses as would, in all probability, take place.

It will be considered, I believe, as a most extraordinary epoch in the history of mankind, that in a few years there should be so essential a change in the minds of men. 'Tis really astonishing that the same people, who have just emerged from a long and cruel war in defence of liberty, should now agree to fix an elective despotism upon themselves and their posterity! It is true, indeed, for the honor of human nature, that there has not been a general acquiescence. In respectable states, there have been formidable minorities. In this, a majority of ten only, out of near two hundred members, neither demonstrate that a majority of the

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people approve the plan ; nor does it augur well for the prosperity of the new government, unless the wisdom and goodness, of those who first act under this system, shall lead them to take effectual measures for introducing the requisite amendments. And this I hope, for the honor and safety of the U. States, will be obtained by the mediation of wise and benevolent men.

Accept my thanks sir, for the enclosures in your letter, which I shall read with great pleasure.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your most obedient & very humble servant,

Gen. JOHN LAMB,  
New York.

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON] <sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY July the 8<sup>th</sup> 1788

DEAR SIR,

I have the honor to enclose for your consideration and signiture, papers relative to our execution of the trust reposed in us for selling M<sup>r</sup> Booths land and purchasing other lands in lieu. The partys are very desirous to have this business finished, and I have no doubt but that the saving clause, and the provision at the end of the deed, renders this conveyance perfectly safe for us. You will please to observe that young M<sup>r</sup> Booths letter requests us to convey to R. Lee ; but circumstances in that family, unknown to him, renders this improper. It is this however, that causes M<sup>r</sup> Charles Lee in his letter enclosed to say " I expect M<sup>r</sup> W. A. Booth will give his direction for conveying to Miss E. A. Lee instead of R. Lee &c — Till such direction be given by M<sup>r</sup> W. A. Booth I presume

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXXII. 330.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the Trustees will forbear to execute the deed " This circumstance, together with M<sup>r</sup>. Bealls letter herein also enclosed, render two things necessary to be observed, before the deed shall be parted with by you — the one is, that M<sup>r</sup>. W. A. Booth signify his assent to the alteration of the conveyance, and also that M<sup>r</sup>. Brooke Beall certify his receipt of the ballance due on this purchase, as requested in his brother M<sup>r</sup>. S. Bealls letter.

I wish that the late excessive rains may not have injured your Crops nearly as much this year, as did the drought of last summer.

This family join me in presenting respectful compliments to your Lady.

I have the honor to be, with every sentiment of esteem and regard, dear Sir your affectionate and obedient Servant.

### TO THEODORIC BLAND<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, October 15th, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

Long acquaintance and friendship, with very similar opinions, will apologize for my troubling you with my wishes that amendments may be procured to the new constitution, by means of the new Congress; and that I am willing to exert my faculties for obtaining such amendments in the senate of the new legislature, if it shall please the Assembly to send me there; and this information to my friends is the more necessary, because I know it is a common art, in these times, to

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 95. Bland was a Member of Congress from Virginia from 1780 to 1783, a member of the Virginia Convention of 1788, and a Representative to Congress from Virginia in 1789. He died in 1790 at the age of forty-eight.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

prevent elections by asserting that persons proposed will not serve if elected. That amendments are necessary to this system, cannot, I think, be doubted by any sensible and dispassionate man. The thing itself, the judgment of many respectable states, and great numbers of individuals, all proclaim it. Nor will amendments, probably, fail to be made, unless the legislatures should choose men so zealously and blindly devoted as to prevent them from seeing defects that all other men do see. As the subject has been very fully considered, and a majority have received it, professedly under the idea of expected amendments, I should think that, as good citizens, it now becomes us to exert our faculties so to conduct the business as that a wise, energetic, and free government, may result from properly amending the present form. Should this fortunately be your opinion, the community will have the aid of your knowledge and experience in the new legislature.

I have the honour to be, with the truest esteem and regard, dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and obedient servant,

THEODORICK BLAND, Esquire.

### TO JOHN JONES <sup>1</sup>

SIR,

CHANTILLY, October 15th, 1788.

My sentiments of the new constitution, in its present form, having been already communicated to the public, it is not necessary here to repeat my objections; nor will it be wondered, that, with such sentiments, I should declare my willingness to serve in the senate of the new Congress, where, in my judgment, the best opportunity will be afforded of doing the most essential services to the community, and especially at its

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 94.

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first institution when amendments so necessary for the security of civil liberty, will probably be the most attainable. I do assure you, sir, that nothing but the reverence I have for the liberties of my country, and a thorough conviction of the danger these will be exposed to by the unamended state of the new constitution, could have induced me to consent again to become a public man; but where the peace, happiness, and freedom of my country seems concerned, all private considerations will, I hope, with me, forever give place. It is impossible that amendments can fail to be recommended by the new Congress, if the legislatures shall send to that body such men as are known friends to civil liberty, and to the amendments that have been proposed by many respectable states, and are desired by such numbers of respectable citizens; but to be sure, if characters shall be appointed to the new government, who are so zealously attached to it as to be incapable of seeing faults in it, the friends of just government may be disappointed in their views of amendments, however ardently, and generally, it may be desired. I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,—  
Hon. JOHN JONES, in Richmond

TO WILLIAM CABELL<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, October the 15th, 1788.

SIR.—A gentleman with whom I have had the honor to serve so long in the Councils of my Country, will I am sure pardon me for informing him of my willingness to continue my public services in the Senate of the new Congress, if it shall please the Legislature to elect me to that office. It is, sir, a conviction

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in the *Virginia Historical Register*, II. 20.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of mind, resulting from the most mature reflection, that the civil Liberty of our Country will be endangered if amendments cannot be procured to the lately received Constitution, that has prevailed with me again to become a public man. When so many respectable States, and such numbers of respectable citizens in all the States, are anxious for amendments; they will surely take place if such men are appointed to the new Congress as are known friends to Civil Liberty and to the amendments required. And I think that the choice of men of a contrary description will as assuredly defeat the wishes of those who desire to secure the public liberty by shutting the door against the numerous abuses, that in its present form, the new Government admits of. It seems to me that if *all* the *friends* of the new system were *friends* to their *Country*, they could none of them oppose amendments, that in their nature are calculated only to controul *bad* but aim not at the restraint of *good* Government. Yet I have heard some of these friends, now that their plan is adopted, begin to argue against amendments until, as they say, experience shall have shewn their propriety. I take the meaning of such men to be, that abuse under the name of use shall be rivetted upon mankind. For the reverence paid to established forms when supported by power has generally proved too strong for correction however necessary it might be. I beg to be remembered to those of your family to whom I am known by having had the honor to serve with them in the General Assembly.

I am sir, with much esteem and regard,

Your most obedient and very humble serv't,

P.S. — A present indisposition prevents this letter from being all written with my own hand which I hope your goodness will excuse.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

[EDMUND RANDOLPH]

CHANTILLY, Oct. 16, 1788.

SIR,

I have the honor to address your Excellency upon a subject that I think much deserves your indulgence, if, as some judge, the Executive have a right to indulge in such cases. It is, Sir, the case of a revenue execution obtained against William Augustine Washington, Esq., late high Sheriff of this county for a large sum, and the gentlemen's effects for want of buyers could not be sold. I believe, Sir, the truth is, that the Under Sheriffs, who are universally reputed men of industry, attention and honesty, have, from the necessity of the case, been obliged to indulge the people who, for want of money and means to pay, could not discharge the taxes, nor would their effects have sold if taken for the same reason. An attention to the public receipts will shew, I trust, that until lately this county has been among the most exact payers of the public taxes. It is therefore presumable that the present backwardness is occasioned not by unwillingness but by incapacity. Mr. Washington has not yet availed himself of the remedy given him by law against his deputies, because he relied on their exertions to be ready in season to discharge the debt; hitherto they have failed, but the strongest reasons exist to induce a belief that the crop now coming in will enable them to pay this demand, and at all events Mr. Washington will deliver his own effects to sale, if they, his deputies, fail, and his effects are ample and

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in W. P. Palmer, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, IV. 509. The letter was enclosed in a petition of William Augustine Washington, "Late Sheriff of Westmoreland" County, Virginia, to Governor Randolph.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

far more than sufficient to satisfy this execution; but his means of doing this will be greatly aided by a large and plentiful crop now getting in. From a consideration of these facts, if a small indulgence can be shown to Mr. Washington, your Excellency and the honorable council will have an opportunity of gratifying the goodness of your own dispositions, and at the same time of preventing a very great Oppression from falling on a worthy gentleman, whilst the public revenue will not be injured, but suspended only for a short time.

I have the honor to be,

With every sentiment of respectful esteem and regard

Your Excellencie's most obedient and very humble servant.

TO [GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK April 6. 1789.

DEAR SIR,

On the Sunday sennight after leaving Mt. Vernon I arrived here, where to my surprize I found that a quorum of the Senate was not assembled, and but a small majority of Representatives.

On this day we went to business & to my great satisfaction I heard a unanimous vote of the electing states in favor of calling you to the honorable office of Pres<sup>t</sup> of the U. S. Before this period I judged it might not be acceptable to speak my sentiments to you on this subject; but now I hope I may be permitted to express my ardent hope that your inclinations may correspond with the United wish of America, that

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXXIII. 333.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

you should preside over those councils which you have so greatly contributed to render independent. Indeed I am sure that the public happiness which I know you have so much at heart will be very insecure without your acceptance.

The two houses feel the necessity of proceeding to the preparation of some important business, that it may be in all possible forwardness against your arrival. That of securing the Impost on the spring arrival seems to be the most pressing.

An Express goes also to Mr. Adams immediately to inform him of his election to the office of Vice President. I pray to be remembered affect<sup>ly</sup> to your lady & the family at M<sup>t</sup> Vernon.

With every sentiment of regard,  
I am D<sup>r</sup> Sir, Yr most obd<sup>t</sup>.

TO SAMUEL ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK April the 25<sup>th</sup>, 1789

MY MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND.

I have received one short letter from you since my arrival here, and I value it greatly because it came from a friend I much esteem and because it shew'd me that I was still in your remembrance. As my enquiries are often about you, I learn that it is more difficult for you to write than it formerly was, and therefore your letters are received as greater testimonials of friendship.

I find that you continue determined to do all the good you can to Mankind by your continuing in public service — The issue of your government election gives me singular pleasure for many reasons, and

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers. Addressed to him "in / Boston" and franked by Lee.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

especially because the hot headed *federalists* as they call themselves, placed the contest upon M<sup>r</sup> Hancocks proposition to your Convention for amendments to our new Constitution.

This procedure argues the extremity of Art, deception, and impudence in these people—because they joined with the idea as a most happy means of procuring Union, and obtaining a ratification of the proffered plan—But now that they have gained their point, they are traducing the Men, and wish to neglect the condition upon which probably their success was founded. Deceit, whether in public or in private life, seldom fails in the end to injure those who practise it. I observe that you mention *efficient* government—I assure you my dear friend that there lives not a Man who more cordially wishes for a Government possessed of the fullest means of procuring the happiness, prosperity, and security of our union—But for these salutary ends it is not in my judgement necessary to establish a system full of ambiguity respecting old and long esteemed Safeguards, whilst the ways, in some instances, to pernicious exertions of power are left much too open. I might object some fundamental errors, such as the idea too prevalent, of One Government founded on the ruin of State Governments—The want of safety to Elections, and the utter want of Responsibility. I hope the idea of Amendments is not lost in Massachusetts where we have been used to find the firmest defenders of Civil liberty. It is probable that this Session of Congress will pass Laws of a nature so gracious as to quiet alarms amongst those who reflect not, that “the safety of liberty depends not so much upon the *gracious manner*, as upon the Limitation of Power.” I heartily wish you health, and I beg my respectful compliments to M<sup>rs</sup> Adams. I am dear Sir, sincerely and affectionately yours.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

P. S.

If you please, let me know if you receive this letter.

TO [THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA] <sup>1</sup>

[BEVERLEY RANDOLPH]

NEW YORK May the 26<sup>th</sup> 1789

SIR,

We have been duly honored with the two letters that you have been pleased to write to us, the one by Col<sup>o</sup> Davies and the last on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month. We beg leave to refer you to Col<sup>o</sup> Davies for the success of his mission, and we shall not fail to give information of the two Vessels you mention, when the time shall come that it will be proper to do so. At present, an Impost bill is before the Senate from the H of Representatives which proceeds but slowly thro our House. The regulation bill, which is the one that will govern the collection, is yet with the H. of Representatives, and will probably, as it is an operose business, be sometime before it passes. A bill for establishing a federal judiciary system is now preparing by the Senate.—These, with an Act passed the two Houses for administering the Constitutional oath is all the material business yet done and doing.

We thank you Sir for your obliging offer to give us such information respecting the public affairs of our State as we may desire to have, and you may be assured that we shall forward such communications to you as we shall judge it may be useful for you to be informed of.

We have the honor to be, with every sentiment

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Emmet Collection, 4217. "Willm Grayson" also signs the letter in autograph.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of respectful consideration, Sir your Excellencys most obedient Servants.

TO PATRICK HENRY<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, May 28th, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

Your favour of March the 23<sup>rd</sup> was yesterday delivered to me, about eight weeks from its date. The Public good, and your recommendation, are motives so powerful with me, that General Martin will be sure of my friendship whenever the time shall come that I can serve him. How the business of appointment to the office he wishes, or any other, will go on, it is not easy to say, because nothing of that kind has yet come upon the tapis. If the constitutional nomination takes place, I am inclined to think that the approbation of the Senate will not be withheld, unless some palpable impropriety should mark the nomination, which is hardly to be supposed. If, however, it should so turn out as to be in my power to serve General Martin, I shall assuredly do it. I have seen very few of the scurrilous papers that you allude to, but from those I have seen, it is my opinion that neither you nor I may be much disturbed at their effects, since it is not possible that they can have influence with any whose good opinion is worth having. Of all the anonymous nonsense and adulation that I have met with, Decius is the most contemptible; his effusions, nevertheless, are pretty similar to the genius and spirit that has animated the rest of his party. Nothing more than report of the Spanish proceeding have reached me; the public

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 387. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 95.

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consideration here has never yet turned upon any thing of that kind. The state of Georgia did, last July, make an offer to the then Congress, of ceding part of her western territory to the United States ; but the terms of cession were then clogged with so many oppressive conditions, that the cession was not accepted. I do not know that the state has since receded from the terms it then proposed ; whenever any thing relative to that business shall come on the carpet, I will inform you. An act has passed the Congress for administering the constitutional oath, and an impost bill is now before the Senate, from the House of Representatives ; the duties are thought too high, and we are proposing a reduction. A long regulating bill, for securing the collection, is now in the House of Representatives ; and in the Senate, a plan is forming for establishing the judiciary system. So far as this has gone, I am satisfied to see a spirit prevailing that promises to send this system out free from those vexations and abuses that might have been warranted by the terms of the constitution. It must never be forgotten, however, that the liberties of the people are not so safe under the gracious manner of government, as by the limitation of power. Mr. Madison has given notice, that, on Monday s'n-night he will call for the attention of the house to the subject of amendments. I apprehend that his ideas, and those of our convention, on this subject, are not similar. We shall carefully attend to this, and when the plan comes to the senate, we shall prepare to abridge, or enlarge, so as to effect, if possible, the wishes of our legislature. I think, from what I hear and see, that many of our amendments will not succeed, but my hopes are strong that such as may effectually secure civil liberty will not be refused. As two thirds of the legislatures have refused to apply for a general convention, the Congress,



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it seems, can constitutionally only submit their propositions of amendments to the legislatures, or to state conventions ; but, I suppose, neither of these modes will fail, where the design is more effectually to secure civil liberty ; the wish to do which, was, I assure you, the sole reason that could have influenced me to come here, for I agree perfectly with you, that your time of life and mine, after the turbulence we have passed through, renders repose necessary to our declining years. From what you write of the lands on the western frontier of Georgia, I suppose that you have views of family settlement there ; as in that case, the Spaniards will be neighbours, I submit to your consideration, to reflect on the national character of that people, which seems to be firm and immovable in friendship, but very inveterate in enmity, peaceable and honest in their dealings, but jealous to an extreme of attempts upon their territory, especially that from whence they derive their wealth. Will it not be prudent, for such as are their neighbours, to cultivate their friendship, rather than provoke their enmity ? It appears to me, that a judicious procedure of this kind, may get every thing from their good will, whilst it will not be pleasant to be in enmity with them ; more especially as there is little doubt, but that in case of quarrel with us, France will upon principles of the Bourbon alliance, inevitably join them. The English court have, for some time past, been assiduously courting the court of Spain to a commercial treaty, and I fear, that our conduct has favoured their views ; such a treaty would hurt us, in the same proportion that it will benefit our former enemies. The eyes of Europe are now turned upon the meeting of the states general in France. If that people succeed in restoring their ancient liberty, France will be the most potent empire in Europe. The war in the north of that part of the

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world, seems likely to continue, unless the peculiar state of England and of France should be the means of restoring peace. My brother Arthur desires his compliments to you; he has read your debates in convention, and accords with you in opinion about the probable issue of the present system.

I am, with great esteem and regard, dear Sir, Your affectionate friend and servant,

PATRICK HENRY, Esquire.

TO [CHARLES LEE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June the 7<sup>th</sup> 1789

MY DEAR SIR,

By the time this letter reaches Alexandria I hope that you and my dear Nancy will be returned in good health to your own house. I expect Nancy will recommence her correspondence with me, now that she has come into the line of Post. I wish to hear very particularly from her about Chantilly, Stratford, Bushfield, Walnut farm, Berry hill, and how my daughter Flora<sup>2</sup> is in health & spirits at present—These are subjects lengthy enough to fill a journal, and I shall not regret the time employed in reading it. The impost bill is upon the point of passing the Senate, where many of the duties on capital articles have been reduced one third. The regulation bill upon which the collection of these duties depends, is yet before the house of Representatives, and being both long and complicated its progress is slow. The bill proposes

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection. Charles Lee, afterward Attorney-General of the United States, had on February 11 preceding married Anne, fourth daughter of R. H. Lee.

<sup>2</sup> Wife of Ludwell Lee, the writer's second son.

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Collectors, Controllers, Naval Officers, Surveyors &c at some principal ports, and part of these only at others — How this matter will finally end it is not easy to say, and therefore a minute description of the bill is now not necessary. I understand that the N. O.<sup>1</sup> is to have fees, the Collector commissions and the Controller Salary — Which of these will be the most profitable seems not certain yet — Where the importations are great, the Collectors will be the best place, but where they are small and the Controllers Salary good this last may be the best — However, you shall have due notice that a proper determination may be come to.

Conversing on the subject of these appointments lately with the P. I mentioned two principles which I had the pleasure to hear him approve of. The first that State Officers in similar lines who had behaved well deserved preference in the service of the U. S. and 2<sup>dly</sup> that having discharged these duties undivided, now that they become divided, the same officers were entitled to the best — He assigned some strong reasons in support of both these ideas. So that it seems probable your wishes for any one of them will be gratified. And when the time comes for application if you choose to write to the P. I will wait on him with your letter and give it all my assistance. What think you of our friend Col<sup>o</sup> Fitzgerald, if he thinks either of these places, after yours, advantageous to him, it is probable that upon application to the Constitutional Nomination he might succeed — I am sure that I will do him all the service in my power — If you judge it proper to mention this to him you will do it. I see that the bill requires personal residence at the Port, & if Yeoc<sup>o</sup><sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Naval officer. Charles Lee was at this time “naval officer of South Potomac” under the state government of Virginia.

<sup>2</sup>Yeocomico.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

should be a port of entry on Potomac the Residence of the N. Officer there will be necessary. This w<sup>d</sup> probably not suit Col<sup>o</sup> Fitz — It might perhaps do for M<sup>r</sup> Scott whom I see by y<sup>r</sup> note to y<sup>r</sup> brother that you approve — These applications are so exceedingly numerous, and often so respectable, that they must distress the P. & many others concerned — I do not see in the progress of this business that the Senate will have much to do in the affair of appointm<sup>ts</sup> but if it lays in my way to aid M<sup>r</sup> Scott I shall not forget him. I see that M<sup>r</sup> Blane has sent the Matresses, Sieves & Ticken, that I wrote for last year — Will you have the goodness to get them contrived safely to Chantilly without their coming under the destructive direction of M<sup>r</sup> W. H. or his Clerks — Apropos — M<sup>r</sup> Hunter promised me here to settle with you & Ludwell on his return for my Goods lost in the Winter through his mismanagement — I shall thank you much for pressing him to an immediate conclusion of this affair that if I am obliged to bring suit no time may be lost in doing it. Or if he will do me justice, that goods may be replaced in kind & value & sent to Chantilly where they are much wanted — My son Ludwell has got the list of the goods, their kinds & cost — You will please to inform me of what is done in this business — I have written to M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Washington desiring him to remit Turners debt without waiting for Moreheads payment. I expect he will do so, when I will either remit you the money you were so good as expend in the purchase of things for my dear daughter and also for the Tea China — Or it may, at your pleasure, be employed here in the purchase of any thing you may want. I find here, Linnen for shirting Negroes, of two kinds ; & much cheaper than anything of the kind in Virg the first, which I think the best bargain, is a thick strong white German Linnen, better in my judgement than

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

any Oznaburgs, rather more than 3 quarters wide at 9<sup>d</sup> a yard our currency, or a shilling this money. I have got 250 y<sup>ds</sup> of it for my people — There is but one Merchant in Town who has it, & he is a German — the other Linnen is brown & made in Connecticut — Tis I think better than the best Oznaburgs, is rather above yard wide and cost 12 3/4 our money a Yard — I think that both these are much preferable bargains to any that can be made with us. Excellent Chocolate is here at a shilling our money a pound. The German Merchant also sells a very strong kind of Bagging containing 18 yards in a piece at 1<sup>s</sup>/ our money a yard — Very fine for bags — This will make about 7 large strong & useful bags — My love to Nancy, to Ludwell, Flora, & Cassius — I am dear Sir your affectionate friend.

TO CHARLES LEE<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June 24. 1789

MY DEAR SIR,

Our friend M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee having had one of his eyes couched has a good prospect of having vision totally restored. In his valetudinary state he has been greatly mortified by a judgement obtained against him in May York court by Col<sup>o</sup> Mason for something more than 2400 pounds currency. I think that the real principal due was a little above £800, which with common interest, it seems M<sup>r</sup> Lee was always willing to pay; but Col<sup>o</sup> Mason insisted on 10 per Cent — This cause has, somehow or other, been miserably conducted in the County Court — For as M<sup>r</sup> Lee states

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Papers, IV. 113. Addressed to him as “naval officer at/Alexandria in/Virginia,” and franked by Lee.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

it, the following facts tho capable of being proved did not appear before the Court. That altho a Notary in France states that M<sup>r</sup> Lee protested the bill, it can be proved that he was in Germany, not in France when & where the bill is said to have been protested by him & in fact he did not protest it—Secondly that the bill was drawn for more than was due to Col<sup>o</sup> Mason & consequently *might have* been protested without incurring 10 p<sup>r</sup> Cent damages which was demanded in an action for damages—3<sup>dly</sup> that M<sup>r</sup> Lee had early in the late war shewn a disposition to pay Col<sup>o</sup> Mason, perhaps in the only way practicable under the then circumstances of war & distance, by giving an order on two of his Creditors here, very good & sufficient Men, but Col<sup>o</sup> Mason chose, as he said, that the money sh<sup>d</sup> remain in M<sup>r</sup> Lees hands—The bill was never transferred by Col<sup>o</sup> Mason but remained his property from first to last—How he can be entitled to 10 p<sup>r</sup> Cent is the question—Were this allowed it would defeat the law that will only allow 5 per Cent, because the Creditor would only have to make his demand in one way instead of another & thereby gain 10 for 5 p<sup>r</sup> Cent, an evasion not to be countenanced—It seems otherwise, & for good reason, where the bill has been absolutely transferred—Under these circumstances M<sup>r</sup> Lee has sued out an injunction from the Chancellor to stop so much of the judgement as relates to interest only, determining to pay the principal—He relies most on you to conduct this injunction, and the consequent Suit in chancery if the injunction should<sup>1</sup> be set up. The discharge of the principal of this judgement M<sup>r</sup> Lee wishes to accomplish<sup>2</sup> immediately and for this purpose he relies on your friendship to negotiate the matter with Col<sup>o</sup> Mason. M<sup>r</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The word “not” is here erased.

<sup>2</sup> Substituted for “discharge” erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Lee considers M<sup>r</sup> Mason as putting Money to interest in good hands — he would therefore pay him a bond of M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Washington with M<sup>r</sup> Rutter Security for about £1000, and this mode he prefers — but if this will not suit, he will either send Bills of Exchange or Specie as shall be agreed upon — the latter being attended with hazard and inconvenience is the least eligible mode — But the first thing to be enquired is whether the execution has been levied or not, if it has been satisfied by an injurious sale of M<sup>r</sup> Lees effects, there is no further room for treaty on this subject, To transact this business with the dispatch it wants, my brother requests the favor of you to ride to Col<sup>o</sup> Masons, and to let him know immediately by letter enclosed to me, what is the issue of this business — M<sup>r</sup> Lee's present situation is such as to render the aid of his friends peculiarly necessary —

In the business of this judgement I think that he has been very much injured, and I shall thank you for attending to it in the manner that he requests by his letter to you now sent. — M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Hunter has been gone from hence a considerable time — He promised me to settle for my goods lost (under his care) when he returned to Alexandria — I have not heard that he has done any thing in the matter — I pray you to press him on this business, and if he will not settle it let suit be brought. The goods are wanted in my family very much, so that if he does not replace them I must purchase here — The public affairs remain as when I wrote you last — Love to my dear daughter & other friends in your Town — Sincerely and affectionately yours,

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [SAMUEL ADAMS]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK August 8. 1789

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I find that the goodness of your own mind has already, in the engagements of mine, found an apology for my silence—it is indeed a just one, and to that mentall engagement I owe a return of the ill health that afflicted me some years ago. Altho, I thank God, not yet in so great a degree. I do very much approve and admire your idea of supporting “the authority and dignity of the state governments within their respective jurisdictions, as far as consists with the purposes for which the fed. government is designed”; And I perfectly agree with you in opinion “that they are but petit politicians who wish to lessen the due weight of the state governments.” I saw something of this sentiment published in your speech to the G. Court on your late election—I then expressed my approbation of it, and have only been prevented by business and illhealth from transmitting to you my wish, that others, in stations similar to yours, might take frequent opportunities of inculcating the same salutary sentiment.

The idea is supported by reason and experience—So extensive a territory as that of the U. States, including such a variety of climates, productions, interests; and so great difference of manners, habits, and customs; cannot be governed in freedom, unless formed into States sovereign sub modo, and confederated for common good.

In the latter case, *opinion*, founded in the knowledge of those who govern, procures obedience without *force*. But remove *opinion*, which must fall with a knowledge

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Samuel Adams Papers.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of characters in so widely extended a country, and *force* then becomes necessary to secure the purposes of Civil society. Hence the military array at Kamts-Chatka, at Petersburg, and thro every part of the widely extended Russian empire—Thus force the parent and support of Tyranny, is demanded for good purposes, as it should seem, altho for ever abused to bad ones. But so wonderfully are mens minds now changed upon the subject of liberty, that it would seem as if the sentiments universally prevailed in 1774 were antediluvian visions, and not the solid reason of fifteen years ago! Among the many striking instances that daily occur, take the following communicated to me by an hon<sup>ble</sup> Member of the H. of R. here. You well know our former respected, republican friend, old M<sup>r</sup> Ro-g-r-Sh-n of Con,<sup>1</sup> whose person, manners, and every sentiment appeared formerly to be perfectly republican. This very gentleman, our old Republican friend opposed a motion for introducing into a bill of rights, an idea that the Military should be subordinate to the Civil power—His reason, as stated, was “*that it would make the people insolent!*” This was in a committee of the H. of R. for reporting amendments to the Constitution. The subjects of Amendments is now under consideration of the same house—how they will terminate I cannot say—But my wishes are stronger than my expectations—My respect for your opinion and recommendations is so great, that if it had in any manner depended on me, not one of those you proposed for office would have failed. I never was, and probably never shall be, a Courtier.—The constitutional interference of the Senate in appointments, may possibly be of public service on some rare occasions—but ordinarily it seems to amount to nothing. The vast patronage

<sup>1</sup> Roger Sherman, of Connecticut.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

of these U. S. is in one only. When wise and virtuous men possess it there can be no injury to the public, but other qualities may render the power dangerous to mankind. It has been labored here to increase the same power by giving to the P. the sole right of removing all officers at the pleasure, under a fancy that such was the fair construction of the Constitution. For what purpose is it said in the 2<sup>d</sup> Sect. of 2<sup>d</sup> Article "He may require the opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive departments, upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices" I ask again for what purposes can it be imagined, that the above power was given, if the same instrument designed that he should remove these Executive Officers at pleasure? — The absurdity seems to me to be too strong — The greater includes the less power, and therefore I am forced to conclude that it is an erroneous construction of the constitution to suppose it gives the P. a right<sup>1</sup> of removal at pleasure — I could not learn where M<sup>r</sup>. Church lodged until M<sup>r</sup>. Gerry informed me a few days ago — I went immediately to his lodging but he had set out on his return to Georgia.

The office of Marshall will depend on the passage of the Judiciary bill which is yet not certain. The Nomination, as usual, will be with the president — If I can find an opportunity of serving M<sup>r</sup>. Keith, I will certainly not let it pass me. Such has been the extreme heat of the weather here, that business and weak health added thereto, I am only now, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, finishing a letter begun on the 8<sup>th</sup>

With my respects to M<sup>rs</sup>. Adams, I remain, as usual sincerely your friend.

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for "power" erased.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO CHARLES LEE<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK Augt. 28. 1789

MY DEAR SIR,

Mr Musket delivered me your letter of the 19<sup>th</sup> instant, and with it £ 30. sent for me by M<sup>r</sup> Corbin Washington — this latter came timeously as the Scotchmen say — All else upon this subject I refer to your attentive consideration as stated in my letter to you by last post — M<sup>r</sup> Musket was totally disappointed in the views that brought him here and therefore he could not & did not pay me any money on Ludwell's account, which you will please communicate to the latter — The Memorials concerning Potomac have been presented & referred to a Committee of the H. of R. I attended that Committee, and found the Chairman (a Gentleman from the Eastward)<sup>2</sup> to be sensible, liberal and accommodating — He admitted the validity of the argument urged and agreed that a conformable report should be made — Last evening I waited on our Madison, but I found him more unpracticable — he thought that you were all too hasty, that time would remove your objections, and he had been informed from Gentlemen below who wished well to the revenues that the present mode would prevent much contraband between the neighboring States & Virginia — I can judge from whom this information came, & so perhaps you may, by reasoning from effects to causes — Kinsale and its friends — However, their objections were combatted by me, and I incline to think that he will, at least, not oppose our wishes — I confess to you, that I fear success in the Senate, even if the other House sent up a bill of relief —

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Massachusetts Historical Society, Washburn Collection, 11. 1. 4, p. 17. Addressed to him at Alexandria, Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Goodhue, of Massachusetts. See *House Journals*, August 22, 24, 26.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

And I judge from what has happened there — We, as I have told them, are in a revenue delirium — Tis really the fact, and consequent determinations are to be expected — I shall do my best to procure the desired relief — The enclosed paper will shew you the amendments passed the H. of R. to the Constitution — They are short of some essentials, as Election interference & Standing Army &c, yet I was surprised to find in the Senate that it was proposed we should postpone the consideration of Amendments until Experience had shewn the necessity of any — As if experience were now necessary to prove the propriety of those great principles of Civil liberty which the wisdom of Ages has found to be necessary barriers against the encroachments of power in the hand of frail Man! My Colleague was sick & absent — The laboring oar was with me — A Majority of 2 thirds however agreed to take the Amendments under consideration next Monday — I hope that if we cannot gain the whole loaf, we shall at least have some bread — A bill of federal crime & punishments has passed the Senate. I think pretty high toned — And now the H. of R. are agitating the question about the place for the permanent Seat of Government: Intrigue is very busy — Potomac or Trenton is the question — how it will issue is not easy to tell — but I have some suspicion that one or the other of the two great Towns of N. Y. or C. will so manage as to procure the final issue to be different from what is right. A resolve has passed both houses to adjourn 22<sup>d</sup> of September — Should it be so I shall be at Alex<sup>a</sup> early in Oct<sup>r</sup> and if you could so manage it that our dear Nancy could be at Chantilly whilst you were at Richm<sup>d</sup> it will be most grateful to her Mother and myself.

I am yours dear Sir with much affection.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, Sept. 13. 1789

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> ult<sup>o</sup> has lain long unanswered because I have been absorbed about the Amendments to the Constitution. They have at length passed the Senate, with difficulty, after being much mutilated and enfeebled — It is too much the fashion now to look at the rights of the People, as a Miser inspects a Security, to find out a flaw — What with design in some, and fear of Anarchy in others, it is very clear, I think, that a government very different from a free one will take place ere many years are passed. It is very far from want of knowledge that confines our revenue to Impost — a little reflection will point you to other causes — The House of Rep: after much debate, have ordered in a Bill for fixing the permanent Seat of Government on the Susquehanna in Penn., and the temporary residence at this place. Evans after Nature, pointed out Potomac for the seat of Empire — But Evans & Nature are nothing to the purpose. N. H. to Penn. inclusive can & will give law. The Treasury system is finished & all new Officers appointed — every one of the old Commissioners are returned into private life — The Judiciary bill not yet through the H. of R. — I informed Ludwell of your desire that I should lay out the money formerly intended thro him, and he wrote me by the last post that M<sup>r</sup> Watson would be here immediately and would bring the money for you — if he does I will lay it out in the best manner I can — Tea is now at 12/ this currency by the chest & 14/ in smaller quantities — Coffee at 1/9 this money by the quantity — There is plenty of Nankeen, Muslin —

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Virginia Historical Society, Leffingwell Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Oil, Anchovies, Raisins, Almonds &c &c but I have not yet enquired the prices of these.—

The love of liberty has fled from hence to France, where, after some very strong convulsions at Paris & Versailles, the Third estate has gained a complete triumph over the Nobles & the Clergy — so that they are now going calmly on to establish a Constitution much like the English — The Military refused to fire upon the people when ordered to do so. A resolve to adjourn on the 22<sup>d</sup> instant passed both Houses of our Congress some time ago but 'tis plain now that it was premature — I will probably be early in October —

My love to Mrs. Lee & and the little girls — their father is much better — I think the Couched Eye will recover Vision. Mr A. Lee goes to Virg'a shortly.

Most affectionately yours.

### TO PATRICK HENRY<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK Sep. 14<sup>th</sup> 1789.

DEAR SIR,

I have written two letters to you since my receipt of yours dated March 23<sup>d</sup>, both which I enclosed to our friend Mr. George Fleming, at Richmond, and he has informed me of their safe arrival, and that he had forwarded them to you. I have since waited to see the issue of the proposed amendments to the constitution, that I might give you the most exact accounts of that business. As they came from the house of Representatives, they were far short of the wishes of our convention, but as they are returned by the Senate they are certainly much weakened. You may be

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 399. A text with minor variations is in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 98.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

assured that nothing on my part was left undone to prevent this, and every possible effort was used to give success to all the amendments proposed by our country. We might as well have attempted to move Mount Atlas upon our shoulders. In fact the idea of subsequent amendments, was little better than putting oneself to death first, in expectation that the doctor, who wished our destruction, would afterwards restore us to life. I am grieved to see too many look at the rights of the people as a miser examines a security, to find a flaw in it. The great points of free election, jury trial in criminal cases, and the unlimited rights of taxation, and standing armies, remain as they were. The most essential danger from the present system arises, in my opinion, from its tendency to a consolidated government, instead of a union of Confederate States. The history of the world and reason concur in proving, that so extensive a territory as the United States comprehend, never was, or can be, governed in freedom under the former idea; under the latter it is abundantly more practicable, because extended representation, knowledge of characters, and confidence in consequence, secure that good opinion of rulers, without which fear, the offspring of force, can alone answer; for all free government resting on opinion, if that fails force must succeed; hence standing armies and despotism follow. I take this reasoning to be irrefutable, and therefore it becomes the friends of liberty to guard with perfect vigilance every right that belongs to the states, and to protest against every invasion of them, taking care always to procure as many protesting states as possible; this kind of vigilance will create caution, and establish such a mode of conduct as will create a system of precedent that will prevent a consolidating effect from taking place by slow but sure degrees. A sufficient number of legislatures cannot be got at present to



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agree in demanding a convention, but I shall be very much mistaken indeed, if ere long a great sufficiency will not concur in this measure. The preamble to the amendments is really curious. A careless reader would be apt to suppose that the amendments desired by the states had been graciously granted, but when the thing done is compared with that desired, nothing can be more unlike. Some valuable rights are indeed declared, but the power to violate them to all intents and purposes remains unchanged.

The southern Indians having repeatedly declared the little confidence they had in the justice of the bordering states, it was thought that sending commissioners from hence to treat with them who were totally unconnected with the parties and their disputes, would be the most likely way to gain the Indian confidence, and thereby obtain a secure and lasting peace. Upon this idea three gentlemen have been sent from hence to treat with the Creeks, when probably some measures may be taken with the Cherokees also. In this mode of doing business there was no opportunity for suggesting General Martin; and those gentlemen who have gone, are only appointed *pro hac vice*, and return here when they have done the business. It is probable that this treaty will end in a large cession of territory to Georgia which may cause a cession of some part to the United States; in either case those who choose may have an opportunity of obtaining grants in that country, said to be a very fine one. As the laws that have passed Congress this session will all be sent to Richmond, where I am happy to hear you will be in the Assembly, it is unnecessary for me to say anything of them in this letter, already I fear too long. It is now proposed to adjourn on the 22d inst. But I think it will be the first of October, before this result takes place. I am sure that nothing I write

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politically to you, will be improperly communicated.  
I am with most cordial esteem and regard, dear sir,  
your most obedient and very humble servant,

P. HENRY Esq.,  
Virginia

### TO PATRICK HENRY<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK, September 27, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

Yesterday's post brought me your favor of Augt. the 28<sup>th</sup>, and also the general letter to the representation of V<sup>a</sup>, concerning the P. E. Academy. As Congress adjourns the day after tomorrow, when we shall return to Virginia, it will not be much in our power before the next meeting, to attend to that business as we wish to do; however, what can be done shall be done. The letter you state to have been written previous to this upon the subject of the academy has not come to hand. We propose to advertise in the most read *Gazette*, that such a character is wanted, stating the terms generally, and to propose that the person willing to accept the trust either go to the Trustees, or by letter to settle the point with them as far as can be done in that manner. I fear that such a person as would be agreeable is not easy to be found disengaged, and at all events that he will expect a very considerable salary, since very large salaries are given in these parts on such occasions. My third letter to you on the 14<sup>th</sup> inst will satisfy you how little is to be expected from Congress, that shall be in any ways satisfactory on the subject of amendments. Your observation is perfectly just, that right without power to protect it, is of little avail. Yet small as it is,

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III.  
402.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

how wonderfully scrupulous have they been in stating rights? The english language has been carefully culled to find words feeble in their nature or doubtful in their meaning. The power of displacing officers was contested with a zeal and constancy that the nature of it deserved. In the Senate we were divided, so that the V. P. determined the question, as you will see in the Journal. This is one of the ill consequences derived from giving a person the right of voting in the Senate who is not a member of it, and who has so probable a prospect, as he may think, of coming to the possession of that power which he agrees to magnify! The contenders for this measure insisted that the Constitution gave the power, this was at once to make it both absurd and arbitrary, because it expressly gives the P. a right to call upon the officers for information in writing concerning their departments — how ridiculous this, if it intended him the power to remove them from office at pleasure? What! vest a right to give political death, and say that the person so vested may demand a paper from him over whom he can exercise destruction. The next attempt, and which will probably succeed, is to send forth all process in the name of the P. instead of the U. S. only. Here is another absurdity. In England, they say the King can do no wrong. But here the P. may be impeached. There, process in the name of the culprit is not to issue for bringing witnesses to try him at the bar where he is put upon his defense, but here it may. But where consolidation is the plan, the state's authority must be kept out of view as much as possible, and the head of the empire shewn as much as may be. These things demonstrate the vigilance necessary to guard against encroachments as was suggested in my last letter. The appointments to offices in the great and influential departments are pretty universally among the most zealous federalists, the

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salaries are vast and the state departments and supports weakened by the drafts in this way made from them. Consolidation must therefore inevitably take place in process of time, without great care and much wisdom on the part of the states. The cause of public liberty and the success and strength of the Union depending essentially, in my opinion, upon the system of confederated republics, every wise and proper measure should be invariably pursued by the friends of freedom, both in the state and federal governments, to secure from invasion the just rights of the former. Let us take counsel from what we see, and fill our state offices with men of known attachments to radical amendments, and whose firmness and abilities may serve as a counterpoise to any attempts that may be made against statistical rights. Upon this principle, which appears to me to be not only wise but necessary, I recommend my brother A. Lee, Esq. to your friendship. He is devoted to liberty, and has greatly suffered in its cause. He has been thoroughly bred to law, he has taken the Barrister's Gown, and has plead with applause at the English Bar, before he quitted it to serve his country as a foreign minister of the U. States. He has been deeply versed in politics, and intimately knows those of America. I refer you to him for a more lengthened detail of politics and opinions here than it is convenient for me to write. If his opposition to the constitution should have been a cause for rejecting his abilities and long public services from this system, it seems to be a powerful reason for admitting him into the service of the State, where I believe he will be eminently useful. By an address, received two days ago from the Assembly of R. Island (copy of which I will send you by my brother) to the federal government, it appears to me as if they intended to keep out of the Union until effectual amendments were made. We ought in

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common prudence to have done the same. Does N. C. design to act in the same manner?

I am, dear sir, with the most affectionate esteem,  
Your friend & servant,

TO PATRICK HENRY Esq.

P.S. — I refer you to my last letter for further observation on Gen<sup>l</sup> Martin. You will see by that how the manner of treating with the Indians necessarily prevented his appointment, if other difficulties had been removed. But at present no such office as a standing Indian agent is appointed. The government of the Western Territory is charged with such affairs.

[UNITED STATES SENATORS FROM VIRGINIA] TO  
THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
OF VIRGINIA<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE  
W<sup>m</sup> GRAYSON

NEW YORK Sept<sup>r</sup>: 28: 1789

SIR /

We have now the honor of enclosing the proposition of Amendments to the Constitution of the United States that has been finally agreed upon by Congress. We can assure you Sir that nothing on our part has been omitted to procure the success of those Radical Amendments proposed by the Convention and approved by the Legislature of our Country, which as our Constituent we shall always deem our duty with respect and reverence to obey. The Journal of the Senate herewith transmitted will at once shew how exact and how unfortunate we have been in this busi-

<sup>1</sup> Copy. Library of Congress, Letters to Washington, LXXIV. 147. A text with variations and an omission is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 99.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ness. It is impossible for us not to see the necessary tendency to consolidated Empire in the natural operation of the Constitution if no further Amended than now proposed. And it is equally impossible for us not to be apprehensive for Civil Liberty when we know no instance in the Records of history that shew a people ruled in freedom when subject to an undivided Government and inhabiting a Territory so extensive as that of the United States, and when, as it seems to us, the nature of Men and things Join to prevent it — The impracticability in such case of carrying representation sufficiently near to the people for procuring their confidence and consequent obedience compels a resort to fear resulting from great force and excessive power in Government. Confederated Republics when the federal hand is not possessed of absorbing power may permit the existance of freedom whilst it preserves Union, Strength, and Safety ; such amendments therefore as may secure against the annihilation of the State Governments we devoutly wish to see adopted —

If a persevering application to Congress from the States that have desired such Amendments should fail of its Objects we are disposed to think, reasoning from Causes to effects, that unless a dangerous Apathy should invade the public mind it will not be many years before a Constitutional number of Legislatures will be found to demand a Convention for the purpose —

We've sent a complete set of the Journals of each house of Congress and thro' the appointed Channel will be transmitted the Acts that have passed this Session. In these will be seen the extent and nature of the Judiciary the estimated expences of the Government and the means so far adopted for defraying the latter —

We beg Sir to be presented with all duty to the

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house of Representatives and to assure you that we are with every sentiment of respect and esteem Sir Your Most Obedient and very humble Servants.

The complete set of Journals is ordered to be sent to each State by the respective Clerks with the Laws. They are not now ready . . .<sup>1</sup>

Hon<sup>ble</sup>: The Speaker of the House  
of Representatives Virginia,

TO THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN<sup>2</sup>

NEW-YORK April 26- 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

I found on my arrival here how impossible it is for you to resist the most powerful attraction with which you are drawn to Chestnut Street — for I think that nothing short of that could have carried you so precipitately from New York — The numerous beauties, the many friends, the gaities & amusements of the Metropolis have no charms for you. — The enclosed letter I found in a packet directed to me, and now forward them by post — The Philippic of Burke I have ventured to keep for the amusement of some friends here, after which it shall be safely returned to you.

My love to all with you, and be assured of the friendship of your affectionate Uncle.

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph is omitted from the text printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, II. 99.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. Addressed to him "at Doctor Shippens Junr in/Fourth Street — Philadelphia," and franked by Lee.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK. May 8. 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW.

I have had a most dangerous attack of the Influenza in my Lungs & Head which has nearly destroyed me—I am much recovered, begin to ride out, but yet very unwell—However I must write to request that you will forward (nicely packt up) by the Bearer M<sup>r</sup> G. O. Graham, the Son of a friend of mine, returning to Virginia from College—The Bracelets of our Cousin Lucinda—He will Carry & deliver them safely to my Son at Dumfries—The follow<sup>g</sup> business, tho small, has given me great trouble; but it seems now near a Close which your goodness may possibly put to it—

In the year 1785 I had occasion to remit a small Sum to Bordeaux, and obtained a Bill from M<sup>r</sup> Edw<sup>d</sup> Digges for £61. 14. 5 Sterl<sup>s</sup> drawn by him as heir & Executor of his brother on M<sup>r</sup> Waterman of Lond<sup>n</sup> who owed his deceased brother that Sum—

This bill I remitted the first and Second, of the same Tenor & kept the 3<sup>d</sup>—In the fall I was informed that Waterman had noted the Bill for protest, because, as he informed me, M<sup>r</sup> Digges had drawn for £1. 10. 8 More than was due his brother, and because he wanted Legal Certificates that M<sup>r</sup> Digges was heir & Executor of his brother—Under which alterations he wrote me that he would pay the money—Unwilling to delay the end for which the money was remitted to France, and knowing that I should run no risk by getting & sending a rectified Set as the first were endorsed by me *payable for my use*, they could not be negotiated but must be returned to me in whom the property rested, in case of protest—Having also

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

a good opinion of M<sup>r</sup> Bondfield, to whom I had written to return me the protest of the first immediately and expect a Rectified draft for the same property in M<sup>r</sup> Watermans hands by first opportunity. I accordingly applied to M<sup>r</sup> Digges, shewd him Waterman's objections — And he without hesitation gave me a Rectified bill for £60.3.9 Sterling and procured the legal documents desired by M<sup>r</sup> Waterman which were remitted with the first bill of this rectified Set — The Second bill of the same set went by next Packet — Unfortunately the Packet that sailed from hence with the documents and the first bill of the rectified set was lost, and the 2<sup>d</sup> bill of same set arrived, was presented & protested, we suppose for want of the documents. M<sup>r</sup> Bondfield, urged by some necessity or other contrived to Negotiate one or both of these bills and never returned them to me — M<sup>r</sup> Cornelius Stephenson & C<sup>o</sup> of your City wrote me that he had a Bill drawn by Digges & endorsed by me protested, the same having been sent him by a Mons<sup>r</sup> Texier to collect & desiring that I as endorser would pay it — I immediately replied to M<sup>r</sup> Corn. Stephenson, enclosed him copies of my Correspondence on the Subject & referd him to the endorsation which rendered the Bill not Negotiable but kept the property in me should a protest happen — this was in the Fall of 1786 & I heard no more from M<sup>r</sup> Stephenson until I arrived here in Congress Summer of 1787, when a M<sup>r</sup> Gouverneur Merch<sup>t</sup> here came to me with an Order from M<sup>r</sup> Stephenson for the money — this surprised me — I shewed M<sup>r</sup> Gouverneur all my correspondencies on the Subject — He expressed his surprise said M<sup>r</sup> Bondfield had acted ill, & that certainly the bill was not negotiable, but my property — And so he said he would write M<sup>r</sup> Stephenson & return him the Bill — So the Money remained & yet does remain lockt up

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

in Watermans hands, for M<sup>r</sup> Digges wont give, nor will I ask him for a third draft for the same money in fact — when there has been such foul play somewhere with his two first Setts — Having represented this frequently to Bondfield & that M<sup>r</sup> Digges could not be compelled to pay this money until the Protests were returned to me, who was the only person that could negotiate the business with him — At length Bondfield informed me that he had paid the money in Phil<sup>a</sup> to M<sup>r</sup> Stephenson & that the protests would be sent me. They were not however, & as I passed thro about 13 months ago I called on M<sup>r</sup> Stephenson & he said he had been paid — directed me where to apply — I went & got the protest of the Second draft for £60. 3. 9 but the protest of the first for £61. 14. 5 was still kept back — I was not at the Mark yet, for M<sup>r</sup> Digges would not on the receipt of one of the protests give a draft or pay the money when in fact they had amongst them a Second protest for the same property in fact, but differing in the Sum £1. 10. 8 which might countenance the idea of their being different bills for different remittances which you have clearly seen was not the fact. I repeated this statement again to M<sup>r</sup> Bondfield last Fall from here, and since my return here this Spring I have received the enclosed from M<sup>r</sup> Bondfield by which it appears that M<sup>r</sup> Stephenson has had both the protests tho but one has been delivered to me — Now my dear Sir I wish you to apply to M<sup>r</sup> Stephenson for the other protest & enclose it with M<sup>r</sup> Bondfields letter now sent — It is in vain for them to keep this protest — the bill is mine by the endorsement & no person but myself can make a settlement with M<sup>r</sup> Digges for it — So that the money can never be sent on until this Protest is put into my hands when M<sup>r</sup> Digges will pay the principal immediately as he has frequently told me — If they sh<sup>d</sup> ask for a Receipt from you it will be neces-



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sary to be cautious in the one you give — Some how this way let it be — Received for R. H. Lee from — a protested bill of exchange for £ drawn in Virg the — day of — 1785 by — on — in London payable to said Lee and being by him endorsed payable for his own use, the property of said Bill remaining in said Lee the said protest has therefore been returned to him — I have been so extremely ill-treated, and so foolishly too for themselves, by some hands through which this bill has passed — that I have been advised to sue the holderup of the Bill with<sup>1</sup> delay for his unjust detention of it — I hope to hear from you soon on this business — 'tis not much altho a strange misconduct has rendered a lengthy detail necessary for explanation — I immediately sent by Servant with your Sisters letter who delivered it with a note of mine to M<sup>r</sup> John Livingston requesting his care of it.

I am quite tired so that I must now, for this time bid you farewell, requesting my love where it is due.

Your affectionate Uncle & friend.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR COUSIN.

NEW YORK — 14 MAY 1790

It will be a fortnight tomorrow since I have been *almost* wholly confined to my Room with a severe stroke of the Influenza that had nearly dispatched me to that Country from whose Bourne no Traveller returns — I thank God that my present state of health, tho feeble, is yet such as promises to be good in a reasonable Time with proper care — I hope you have long since received my letter by young Graham, & that he has safely carried on the Bracelets.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

You will have the goodness to inform me of this & of my other commissions to you — Is the “Widow of Malabar” really a thing of genius & entertainment? or does your Theatre, in a spirit of Politeness state it so? I rely on your judgement as a Critic Sound, if not Severe — When I propose you to get it for me & if you will stake your taste upon it — The enclosed supposed you might be here — The plaguey Influenza Cough sticks faster than a blister, for the latter has quitted me but the former yet distresses — Is your whole Soul absorbed — Absolutely engrossed, so that you cannot write but of Love, & to your Love — Love does not forbid friendship from sliding in for a Moment or so — Under this idea I may hope an answer — My best affections where you know they are due I pray you to present —

Sincerely yours.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK May 15. 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW

I must begin by assuring you that I am yet much too unwell to write with any ease to myself — but having this day received your favor of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ins<sup>t</sup>. I conceive myself bound to make an apology for entertaining a doubt that you could for a moment cease to feel the obligations of friendship. I shall expect the protest from Stephenson, and hope soon to hear from you that M<sup>r</sup> Graham has carried on the bracelets —

The Anvil &c stands right, but I think the Iron Monger who furnishes the Bar Iron should be expostulated with for demanding more of me because I prefer laying out my money in Phil<sup>a</sup> than I can here get the

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

very best Swedish bar Iron & even the best Pennsylv<sup>a</sup> Iron. I hope therefore that he will think no more of asking an advance because I take only a quarter of a Ton. Should he agree, and the Vessel going to carry my brothers Plaster of Paris will agree to land my few bars & Nail Rods at my plantation at Hallows's Marsh just after he passes the Mouth of Nomony on the South Shore opposite Blackstones Island, Where my Overseer M<sup>r</sup> Moxley will receive it & give him a Receipt — In such case Ship it by that Vessel, or else let it remain a little longer — Take the Captains bill of Loading for the things he takes on my account — N. York is at present a perfect Hospital — few are well & many very sick — Among the latter is unfortunately placed our most worthy P. of the U. S —

You know how strong my private predilections are for P. You know how very sincerely I love many there & at German-Town — Therefore you may well suppose that the cause must be very potent that will withhold my voice from what will promote<sup>1</sup> her prosperity —

My love to our Common friends  
Your affectionate Uncle.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>2</sup>

N. York May 18- 1790

MY DEAR COUSIN,

This days post brought me your favor of the 14<sup>th</sup> instant with the protest enclosed, for which I must not delay to thank you, altho I assure you that in my present state of weakness it is very painful for me to write — Respecting the removal of Congress I beg leave to refer you to my letter sent, I think, by last Mondays

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for an illegible word erased.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

post — As I am informed by some of the Physicians who attended the President, he has been dangerously ill, but since last Saturday his disorder has fortunately taken so favorable a turn, that his recovery is not now doubted — You do not mention M<sup>r</sup> Graham, or whether he carried on with him My Cousin Lucindas bracelets — In my last I have written concerning my  $\frac{1}{4}$  Ton of Iron & the Nail Rods — My love where you know it is due & where it is certainly placed —

I am my dear Nephew

Your affectionate Uncle & friend.

M<sup>r</sup> Jefferson has rec<sup>d</sup> your compliments — he too has been extremely ill, but is now well enough to ride out. —

TO [ARTHUR LEE]<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK May 19. 1790

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Since my arrival here I have written to you twice and have received as many letters from you — I think you mention to have written one letter that I have not received, to wit, in answer to mine of the 18<sup>th</sup>. Your letters to M<sup>r</sup> Dorchmer & Mr. Hammond have been delivered, and I wish they may have the proposed effect. But your commissions of Gallantry have not yet been executed, and perhaps never may, at least in the precise way that you mention. Having been brought nearly to my Grave by a severe illness, I feel very little disposed to Gallantry — I do most perfectly agree with you, that Men (not Government) are wanted — I have long thought so, but now I know it — This goes by a young Gentleman and you know how careless, now a days, such are. So that for politics I must

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 174.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

refer you to the enclosed papers — I hope to hear from you frequently & I will endeavor to be equally communicative —

Your affectionate brother.

Turn over

If you had not learnt every body as well as you have, I would say, are you not Astonished to be informed that the Marked Resolutions in the daily Advertiser of the 18<sup>th</sup> instant should be so opposed as probably to frustrate them altho tis certain a parcel of Scoundrel Speculators went directly after the appropriation of last September & cheated the Soldiers out of 27,000 dollars for less than a penny in the pound — And tho the Money is yet in the pub. Treasury — & these resolves only calculated to prevent the fraud from being carried into effect.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May 23<sup>d</sup> 1790

I am very thankful to my dear Nephew for his favor of the 20<sup>th</sup> instant. The enclosed shall be sent by to-morrows post to Ludwell. I went yester-Evening to the Presidents and was introduced to his Chamber (the first it seems, since his illness, except his Physicians & his family) I found him sitting in his easy Chair, where he had been greatest part of the day — his countenance expressed a clearness that shewd the Morbid matter which occasioned his malady had been well removed — He has had no return of fever since the first left him which is now 8 or more days, and on Monday he hopes to ride out in his Carriage — So you see that all danger of relapse seems now removed — Now for

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Phil<sup>a</sup> Many circumstances have concurred to render it probable that our Adjournment will be to meet at Philadelphia — I shall certainly Vote for it, and so I think will my Colleague — I believe there is a majority in S——e and I am told that no doubt remains of the other H——e — However, as intrigue may defeat the most probable prospects, it is prudent not so to speak of this matter as that the account may come from here — Success will be more sure by the proposition coming on with<sup>t</sup> previous room for Cabal, and the thing be yet very fair as both Houses will be full from this time. You will find that M<sup>r</sup> The. Randolph, late from hence for Virginia, had engaged to carry on Miss Lee's bracelets in case Graham got them not — Be so kind as inform me if M<sup>r</sup> Randolph gets them, and of the whole Cost — I take it for granted that my Iron & Nail Rods will go as mentioned in my last and as you reply they will. The Captains bill of Loading will be very requisite for me. My love where you know it is due.

I am very truly your affectionate  
Uncle & friend.

TO [CHARLES LEE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK May the 23<sup>d</sup> 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have omitted writing to you being uncertain where you were, and therefore waited your return to Alex<sup>a</sup> I now congratulate you on the birth of your daughter, and the prosperous state of both Mother & child. Molly writes me that the Child is very pretty. Our President is so well recovered from a dangerous illness

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Lenox Library, Emmet Collection, 1342.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

as that he proposes tomorrow to ride out if the day is good. We have had a most Morbid season in this City, and it still continues— many have fallen sacrifices & myself had nearly gone to visit my fathers. I thank God that my health & strength are greatly restored. I hope that my Bale & paper parcel by the Rachel, Cap<sup>t</sup> Blakeney, are by this time safely at Chantilly. When I was here in the year 1787 I desired M<sup>r</sup> Greenleaf the Printer of the N. York Journal to send Me his Newspaper—he says he has regularly done so ever since, & to your care as desired— He has accordingly charged me with 3 years Gazettes—I told him that I had not received them, nor did I believe that you had— He still insisted on having sent them, but said that on writing to you, if you replied to me that they had not come to you, he would give it up— 'Tis certainly hard on him, if he sent them; and certainly hard on me who got them not, to pay for them— However, if you have received them I will pay for them with great pleasure. Let me know, if you please, how this is? Has Coffee yet fallen to 1<sup>s</sup>/ & have you purchased for us both as proposed? The India Ships begin to arrive—one is already here & three more expected at this port within the Month— The Secretary of the Treasury tells me that he has written a Circular Letter stating that when Vessels go from one district to another in the Same State and call or come to a part of the District where no Collector or N. officer *resides*, that they are at liberty to land goods without going to the Office for a permit— This you know was ever my opinion— But now, I suppose, Vessels going up & down Potomac from one district to another will be in no difficulty about landing our Things at Nomony, with<sup>t</sup> going to Yeocomico for permit—

As you will probably hear frequently from Chantilly,

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I shall thank you for dropping me a line of information now & then how they all are there —

I am very sincerely your most affectionate friend.

P.S. Where is your brother Harry, & how does his M<sup>rs</sup> Lee — I want to write to him, but have understood that he was at some Springs in the Western Country.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK JUNE the 1<sup>st</sup> 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW

Your letter of the 28 of May found me in great grief, it having arrived about two hours after the death of our much valued friend Col<sup>o</sup> Bland, who departed this life this forenoon after a painful illness of 11 days — It must be so — “Good dyes immature and at its death bequeathing endless pain” — Altho I thought our prospects of meeting at Phil<sup>a</sup> the next Session were well founded, experience hath so far proved that I was mistaken — To some of your friends I gave it as my opinion, that to prevent the success of intrigue, it would be better not to bring forward the motion until the time of adjourning was come; they thought otherwise, and on the motion being made in Senate, you lost it by a majority of two — For Phil<sup>a</sup> were N. H. half of Jersey M<sup>r</sup> P——n<sup>2</sup> being against — Pensylv<sup>a</sup>, Delaware, Maryl<sup>d</sup> and Virginia — Against you, Massachusetts, Connecticut, N. Y — half Jersey — N. E. S. C. & Georgia — A bill was then proposed for fixing both temporary & Permanent Seats — but in the meantime the House of Representatives passed a Resolve with a Majority of 16 to meet at Phil<sup>a</sup> the next Session — Their resolves & our Bill are both now before the Senate — No man

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Paterson.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

who has sense enough to ballance a straw sees not that the effect of the Bill will operate solely to the purpose of keeping Congress here, where now that Rhode Isl- and has acceded to the Constitution, it will probably remain for 40 years to come. Those, who thro motives of ambition & choose to hazard everything, will I suppose continue to come here, and for me they are welcome to do so. Had our poor friend Bland been well the whole Representation of Virg<sup>a</sup>, in both houses, would have been for Phil<sup>a</sup> — All but him so voted, & he poor Man was ill in bed — I spoke to M<sup>r</sup> Staats Morris as you desired — He said that he had received your letter & that he had answered it — He is now gone to South Carolina having sailed for Charles Town a week ago — I will write to you shortly about our friend A. L. and in the meantime I will thank you for your attention to the bracelets, and the Iron. To all our friends both at Phil<sup>a</sup> & Germantown I send my love —

I am with the truest affection, your friend & Uncle.

P.S.

Let me know quickly if you receive this letter & when — for as Heaven & Hell are now moved to keep us here, & my sentiments are well known, Curiosity may be prompted to know what I write to you on the subject —

This letter will go from hence tomorrow morning the 2<sup>d</sup> June —

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK June 5. 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

I am this moment favored with yours of the 3<sup>d</sup> instant for which I thank you — The business of the

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Seat remains much as when I wrote you last — Your friends did on Wednesday the 3<sup>d</sup> oppose the Committment of the Bill for fixing the Perm<sup>t</sup> & Tempor<sup>y</sup> Seat of Govern<sup>t</sup> to a private Com̄ittee, because it would produce delay, & because the subject was of a Nature fit only to be discussed in a Com̄ittee of the whole Senate where it must go at last — The Members for & against Phil<sup>a</sup> were then tried, & the Senate divided 12 for & 12 agst the Commitment M<sup>r</sup> Patterson voting with us <sup>1</sup> — The Vice P. sent it to a private Committee where it has remained ever since. What was apprehended is verified and delay alone is the consequence — 3 Members of the Committee being agst you — M<sup>r</sup> Henry & myself are overruled in every proposition for reporting — Thus we shall probably remain until the Rhode Island Senators arrive & then the business will no dou[b]t be pushed, and end as you may judge. I fear you have little to expect from N- C — or from G — a

My family at Chantilly, & that of Stratford have been severely visited with the Measles — they are, I thank Good all recovered, or in a good way. Give my love where you know I place it.

Your affectionate Uncle.

TO PATRICK HENRY<sup>2</sup>

NEW YORK, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

My ill state of health, the inclemency of the season appointed for the meeting of Congress, which in this place is most severely felt by all, and absolutely de-

<sup>1</sup> The words "Mr. Patterson voting with us" are inserted above the line.

<sup>2</sup> From the text printed in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry*, III. 421. A text with variations is printed in R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 80.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

structive to valitudinary people, prevented me from reaching Congress, before the 20<sup>th</sup> of April. Previous to my coming, the cession of North Carolina had been received, and legalized by both houses; and a temporary government there, similar to that west of Ohio, established. This system included the appointment of a governor of that district, who by the same system is also Indian agent, and authorized to transact all affairs with the Indians, in a more extensive and absolute manner than such agents have been heretofore authorized to do. This then being an office of great consideration and importance, you may easily see that it would be earnestly sought after, and attainable only by great interest, and particularly such, as was supported by persons in office here from that state, which had made the cession, as well as by those from Georgia, who were hostile to General M——n. On my arrival here, and finding your two letters, that had been here some time before, I immediately caused Governor Martins to be P——d; the event has been, as apprehended, that your friend would fail, for Mr. William Blunt, of North Carolina, (heretofore in Congress, from that state,) has been appointed governor of the ceded territory, and, as I have observed above, that appointment includes the Indian agency; thus this business has terminated. I should have given you this information sooner, but quickly after my arrival here, I was, with many others, taken extremely ill, so that my life was long in danger, and I was confined for near a month. The effects of this malady are still upon me, and my weakness so considerable, as to render writing painful to me. With my letters, I found one from you to Colonel Grayson, which I secured, and now return to you, presuming, that you design it only for the inspection of the friend to whom it was addressed. It is impossible, for me to describe

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the scene here, and shall I content myself with saying, that every thing met with in my former life is mere trifling, compared with this, and you know that I have been in very stormy legislative scenes. The active and persevering efforts of those who have engrossed the public securities for little or nothing, not content with that advantage, must have six per cent forever, on the full nominal value of their possessions; so that a vast monied interest is to be created, that will forever be warring against the landed interest, to the destruction of the latter; and this evil, great as it would be, by funding the debts of the United States only, is to be increased ten fold, by the assumption of the state debts. By this plan the monied and the political speculator, will both be gratified; the former, by the way I have already stated, and the latter, by possessing the general government, with the sole cause, and consequently, with the whole power of taxation, and so converting the state legislatures into mere corporations. That this will be the consequence of funding the continental and state debts, amounting to about eighty millions of specie dollars, there can be no difficulty in foreseeing. There appears to be no prospect of further amendments to the constitution, this session, and I own, 'tis my wish, that the amendments generally, as proposed at the last session, had been adopted by our legislature; for although there is much force in your observations, upon that subject, yet when I consider one great object of declarations beyond which government may not go, to wit: that they inculcate upon the minds of the people, just ideas of their rights, it will always be hazardous for rulers, however possessed of means, to undertake a violation of what is generally known to be right, and to be encroachments on the rights of the community; besides that by getting as much as we can at different times, we may

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

at last come to obtain the greatest parts of our wishes. It would probably contribute as much to this end, if at the ensuing election of representatives, instructions were given by the people of those districts that send influential members here, to exert themselves to procure such additional amendments as have not yet been made. Such bad use has so often been made of my letters, that I am sure, the bare hint of this, is sufficient to secure your remembrance, that when I write to you, 'tis always in confidence. I shall be at all times happy to hear from you, being very sincerely, dear sir,

Your affectionate friend and ob't serv't.

PATRICK HENRY, Esq.  
Virginia.

TO [ARTHUR LEE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June 10, 1790

MY DEAR BROTHER,

By the time this letter reaches Alexandria I hope you will have returned there with the satisfaction of having left our friends in Westmoreland all in a fair way of recovery — I am very thankful for your letter from Stratford which is much more circumstantial and satisfactory than I am used to receive from Virginia — But I do, and shall continue to feel much uneasiness for my daughter Nancy whose situation, from your state of it, is by no means a favorable one for her — The Measles taking her with a fever and sore Breast already upon her, may endanger her greatly. — Relieve me from my anxiety on her account as soon as you can — The letter you mentioned to have written declaring yourself and desiring I would write to Pickett & others I have not received — I

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 200.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

got one from you desiring me to inform our cousin R. B. Lee that *he* had declared you prematurely (which he denies having done) but in that you seem not fixt about standing yourself—However I will write to Col Picket shortly—Since my illness, a feebleness is left behind that renders writing hurtful to me. The President has certainly been dangerously ill, but he is fortunately recovered so well as to attend to business, and has been for three or four days past at the Hook for benefit of the Sea Air & amusement—This place however, seems not favorable to his health any more than it is to most of the Southern members of Congress—Yet we have been defeated after a strong attempt to remove from hence—16 majority for it in the H of R. & in the Senate 12<sup>1</sup> for & 13 against—The assumption has been frequently rejected in the other House, yet it is to be again pushed—The funding Bill is with us which proposes to fund the old Continen<sup>l</sup> money at 75 for one—Tis probable that we shall make it an hundred for one—And instead of Land and the various alternatives for paying the debts of the U. S—it seems probable that all will be refused but the simple plan of paying with money the interest at 4 p<sup>t</sup> Cent & part of the principle; leaving the Land to be sold by Land Office and the money applied to the debt—You will see that our old friend S. Adams still retains his attachment to the State Governments by his speech in one of the inclosed papers—Have this repub[lished]<sup>2</sup> in the Alexandria paper, & get Ludwell to send it to Davis in Richmond to publish it in his paper—We have no news here—the Packet brought none, but a probability of the war continuing in the N. of Europe—

Your affectionate brother.

<sup>1</sup> An attempt to erase this for “11” is indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Damaged.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

My love to all my friends with you — Please look to Cassius now & then and urge his attention —

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN] <sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June 13. 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

I have received your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> with a letter enclosed for Count Andreani — I have been twice to search for him in vain — Being as you state him an Agreeable, he is so sought after that there is no finding him — I have been obliged to leave your letter for him, with my compliments, in the hands of M<sup>r</sup> Madison who lodges in the same House — We have tried every method without effect, for holding Congress at Phil<sup>a</sup> next Session — It turned out as I feared — And now, after trying your place again, it failed in the H. of R. and they have sent up a Resolve for meeting next at Baltimore — what will be the success of this, I am sure I cannot tell — But I am sure that I heartily wish to get from hence — Be so good as to let me know the cost of my Cousin Lucindas bracelets that I may settle that account — I see by the papers that Cap<sup>t</sup> Elmer is returned to Phil<sup>a</sup> so that I hope he will shortly now carry my  $\frac{1}{2}$  Ton of Bar Iron with the Nail Rods —

I hope however that he will land them as he goes up & if not as he goes up, that he will do so as he returns down the River from Alexandria which sure he may do with perfect safety & propriety — My love where it is due —

Sincerely and affectionately yours.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. A text with minor variations is printed in the *Richmond Standard* of December 6, 1879.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN] <sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June 17<sup>th</sup> 1790

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I find by your last that you had not received my last, when yours was written — In mine I had given you a precise statement of the business relative to the Seat of Government — It is an affair in which I have been so much agitated & so often disappointed by the very extraordinary detours of the friends to this place, that the very thought of it really sickens me, and I now write on the subject merely to oblige you — And now I can only say that my best belief is, that we shall be chained here for a great length of time — The present question is, whether we shall adjourn to Baltimore — but this, like the rest, will, I think terminate in staying here, which God in his infinite mercy forbid — Give my love to my much esteemed friend your father and say that I have presented his order to M<sup>r</sup> Wincoob<sup>2</sup> who promises to consider of it & thinks he will provide the money before we adjourn, which seems now to promise not to be before September — The present great dispute is, whether the debts of the United States shall be funded at 4 or at 6 per Cent — The former is your friends opinion, & there is some reason to think it will prevail.

My love to my friends with you and be assured that I am yours with great affection.

If the funding Bill succeeds, the Salary proposed for the State Commissioner of Pensylv<sup>a</sup> is 1500 dollars annually — M<sup>r</sup> Smith will have my Vote —

19 June.

Since writing as on the other side a dawn of hope presents for our yet going to Philadelphia — But you

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Wynkoop?

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

shall hear more of this so soon as we have tried our new experiment — Remember me to the Angel Group in Chestnut Street.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK June 29. 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW.

I am not unwilling to be indebted to you because I am sure of having a merciful Creditor — And so I acknowledge myself your debtor for two letters, that which covered Ellwoods receipt, and your last of the 17<sup>th</sup> instant —

Your goodness will take this, I hope, as a discharge for both — If I were to attempt the detail of all the Votes, Manœuvres, & detours that have perplexed Congress upon the business of Residence, I should tire both you and myself — Let this therefore remain for conversation hereafter. At present I think that a very fair prospect opens for our being with you next Session — I think it right that it should be so, and therefore you may be sure that my efforts shall not be wanting.

From the first of our meeting in 1774 to the present minute there has never been any altercation between the gentleman you mention and myself, but on the contrary, perfect civility and good humor — But such is the temper of the times, that if a Man believes a twentieth part of what he hears he will believe more than enough — The bracelet makers charge is right, 20 dollars being the sum agreed for — And the balance of the money you had from me over the 20 dollars is to go to the payment of the Iron that Ellwood carries — According to the price stated by the

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Iron-monger to me it will be sufficient, but if not, I will pay the ballance— You will present me as a Homage at the Shrine of your beauties, and perhaps they will not think themselves the less powerful for commanding homage from the old as well as the young since Homer (a great Judge of human nature) has celebrated the beauty of his Helen by making the *Sages* of Troy confess that a ten years war might well be supported for the acquisition of beauty like hers— Present my love where you know I place it—

Your affectionate friend and Uncle.

M- Wyncoob has not spoke further to me about your fathers order— perhaps he waits for the close of the Session—

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK 30 June 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

Just going to bed I have but a moment to inform you that this day in Senate by a Majority of 16 to 10 we ordered to the third reading a Bill for carrying Congress to Philadelphia after this Session, there to remain for Ten years, and then to go to Potomac. We have little doubt but that we shall pass this Bill in the Senate, and we are assured that a Majority in the H. of R. is there ready to receive & pass it— Of the success of this you will be informed in due season— The Gentleman who will deliver you this, is the Nephew of our late worthy friend Col<sup>d</sup> Bland, and he deserves your civilities—

My love to all my friends— farewell.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK July 1<sup>st</sup> 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

I promised my friend M<sup>r</sup> Stark, who by the time this reaches you will be in Phil<sup>a</sup>, to inform him thro you how the Bill went in the Senate respecting the future Seats of the general government—I have now the pleasure to inform both you and him that the bill for adjourning Congress to Philadelphia after this Session, there to remain for ten years, and then to go to the Potomac; was this day passed in Senate by a majority of two votes—Tis well known that one Gentleman in the minority would have voted with the majority had it been necessary—but there being enough & he the last Voter, jokingly he voted in the negative—

It rests now with the H of Representatives, where we are assured by many Members, that a Majority will pass it into a Law—Thus, well has ended this very troublesome business—Truth is great & will prevail—For surely it is true that the convenience of a real majority of this Union is consulted by being in your [ci]<sup>2</sup> ty rather than in this—

farewell.

Let me know if you get this letter & when.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>3</sup>

N. YORK—July 6. 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW—

Your letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> I received this day, and whatever may be the opinion of others with respect to me, I am happy to find that yours, which I much value,

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Hole in the Ms.

<sup>3</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

states me as I really am — Not suffering private regards to supplant public duty — I think that whilst I live I shall never forsake this principle —

It was not difficult to foresee that all the arts of division practised in the Senate would be repeated in the H. of R. and so, this day, the first that they entered upon the consideration of our bill, has been wasted in debate upon a proposed amendment to substitute Baltimore for Potomac — no question yet taken upon that — Tomorrow will probably be passed in determining whether N. Y. shall be preferred to Phil<sup>a</sup> — &c<sup>e</sup> &c<sup>e</sup> &c<sup>e</sup> — Our friends seem determined hereafter to prevent the Adversary's stratagem for delay & division, by letting them talk and the former be contented with voting — Thus perhaps, this troublesome business may be ended on thursday when it is expected that the bill will be carried<sup>1</sup> by a Majority of one or two at least — Should this Bill succeed it will be a very strong proof of the prevalence of truth over its contrary — for every art that can be devised has been practised to overcome truth and public convenience — Stratagem in every shape — threats of Mob — Severance of the Union — And even beauty has condescended to aid a misjudged policy in this business — for this day the House has been crowded with Ladies, as much as to say, as you Vote, so will we smile — A severe trial for susceptible minds — And a very unfair (if I may say that Ladies can do any thing unfair) whilst the Abundant beauty of Philadelphia had not an equal opportunity of shewing its wishes — May heaven protect you & us all —

Yours affectionately.

<sup>1</sup> The words "without division" are here erased.



# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK 7 July 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW.

Last evening I informed you how the business of Residence went on — this day has been passed in practising the same monœuvres that we were entertained with in Senate — Baltimore has been rejected with many other questions proposed for the purpose of dividing the friends of the bill, but they have all proved unsuccessful — The house adjourned — today upon a motion for dividing the time of temporary residence between this City & Phil<sup>a</sup> — The same was tried with the Senate & rejected, the same fate is like to attend it in the H. of R. — Your friend Count Andreani is gone to see you — I have frequently called on him at his lodgings, but have not had the happiness to find him at home — I still continue weak since my Influenza attack which renders writing unpleasant to me, and only tolerable when I write to friends whom I value as much as I do you, and they are very few —

Yours affectionately.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN]<sup>2</sup>

N. Y. 8<sup>th</sup> July 1790

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

The debates have ended this day with rejecting every proposition of amendment to our bill, which augurs well for its final passage — Tomorrow, or the next day, will probably put a period to this business and secure our next Session with you —

farewell.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[UNITED STATES SENATORS FROM VIRGINIA] TO  
THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA<sup>1</sup>

J[OH]N WALKER  
RICHARD HENRY LEE

[BEVERLEY RANDOLPH]

NEW YORK July 25<sup>th</sup> 1790

SIR,

We have now the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter with its enclosure respecting Lead mines and manufacture. The proposition came seasonably here when a Bill for augmenting the impost was under consideration —

We have the satisfaction to inform you that it was readily agreed to lay a duty of one cent p<sup>r</sup> pound on all imported Lead, which we hope will be found a sufficient protection for our infant manufacture of this article. We are sorry to inform your Excellency that the assumption of the State debts into the funds of the U. S. is likely to succeed at last — The measure was brought on in Senate and carried by a small majority after having been twice or three times rejected in the H. of Representatives, where yesterday it was agreed to by a small majority. We have endeavored to render this business as little hurtful to our Country as possible, by preparing for as large an assumption for Virginia as could be obtained.

The Sum assumed for our State is 3,500,000 dollars, which being more than we owe, will serve to cover a part of the large ballance that we claim from the Union.

With great respect and esteem we have the honor to be your Excellencys most obedient Servants.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. by Lee. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection. Signed also "Jn. Walker." Endorsed as filed "Aug. 3<sup>d</sup>/1790."

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [WILLIAM? LEE]<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK, July the 27. 1790.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have this day received your two letters by Post with the Certificates, which, though I have not counted, I suppose to be right — The manœuvres concerning *funding & assumption* have been many and subtil — the latter had been frequently voted out in the H. of R. and a bill sent up for funding the Continental debts proper of the U. S. upon the 3 alternatives of the Secretary's report — The assumption having been voted against unanimously by our Representatives — In the Senate we rejected the Secretary's plan, funded the principal of Cont<sup>l</sup> debt 2 thirds immediately at 6 pr Cent & the other third at same interest after 10 years — The whole Interest of this debt amounting to 13 millions was to be at 3 pr cent immediately — and directed the Fund to be kept a sacred deposit for sinking the principal — But — upon this, and in the same Bill, they, the Senate, assumed for State debts 21.500.000 dollars to be funded in fact on terms as good as the Continentals — This bill passed the Senate by a very small majority — say 2 —

It was generally supposed that the Assumption part of our Bill would be rejected by the H. R. but Mss<sup>r</sup> R. B. Lee & White from our Country, with Gale & Dan'l Carroll from Maryland, changing sides, the Assumption was agreed to, and the Cont. interest upon interest raised to 4 pr cent — and 7 instead of 10 years proposed for funding the postponed third of the principal of the Continental debt at 6 pr cent — These latter amendments with respect to interest are now before the Senate — It seems probable that the whole will be agreed to, because the contenders (some

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Virginia Historical Society, Leffingwell Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD [HENRY LEE

of them) for low interest, are still greater Contenders for the Assumption; so that 'tis probable they will take the increased interest rather than hazard the loss of Assumption — you contend for 15 Shillings, if the debt is funded — M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Lee will take 12 / — My idea is, altho I give all possible credit to the prevailing & powerful interest of Speculators, yet, with the Assumption of 21.500.000 for State debts, with the other Mass, that more is undertaken than can be accomplished — so that if the certificates were mine I would take 12 / and run no further risk — A large Seller in the Broker way, tells me that finals are now 10 / and that if the bill passes they will be at 12 / but then they who purchase, will not allow anything for interest, since the issuing of indents ceased — Or, since there was any provision for paying interest made by Congress — perhaps they may alter if the bill should pass giving 4 pr. cent on all the interest presently — Thus I have told you all that I know about the matter and you will, by return of post, give me your Ultimatum — Bank Stock, I understand is not easily to be purchased here, the regularly paid quarterly interest being 7 pr Cent — How it is at Phila — I do not know — I think it probable that we shall adjourn at the close of next week, i.e. the 6<sup>th</sup> of Aug., so that I must hear from you before that time — I enclose you a letter for Capt. Chilton whom I forgot, & who is certainly a very influential Man — My love to my friends.

Yours affectionately.

P.S.

I have received 13 dollars for your cow & calf — I shall presently pay for your Pork — the ballance is ready for your order — The little Grocer in Queen Street near the Corner Wall Street, says you paid him for a large Bottle of old F. Brandy that still remains with him — What is to be done with it?

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

I have just now paid Mr. Henry Haydock  $8\frac{1}{4}$  dollars for your Pork, the ballance in your favor for the cow is  $4\frac{3}{4}$  dollars which are at your command.

Will you be so good as to attend a little to Cassius —

TO [ARTHUR LEE]<sup>1</sup>

N. YORK August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1790

MY DEAR BROTHER,

The enclosed letter seal'd with black was this day given to me at the Levy by a gentleman just arrived from England, who said Lord Lansdowne desired him to deliver it to you. The other letter was given me by I know not whom at present. You desire information how our representatives voted last year, on the question of Instructions. I have enquired but cannot learn—do you not think however that in canvases like yours, it will be well to apply the Law maxim—That claim should be founded on the strength of your own title, not on the weakness of your adversary's. It seems to me that this will be the most successful method, and certainly the least exceptionable. You will receive enclosed the Secretary's estimate of the sufficiency of the funds for paying the Interest of the foreign & domestic debt, if the ways and means bill now under consideration passes, which will probably be the case—provisions for paying the interest of the 21,500,000 assumed for state debts will not be made until the next session—The present being to end the last of this or the middle of next week. I have not received any answer yet from you to my last

<sup>1</sup> Ms. copy made from the original, January 31, 1837, by I. A. G. Davis, Chairman of the Faculty of the University of Virginia. University of Virginia, Lee Papers, No. 206. A transcript of this letter with the date "August 5" is in the Virginia Historical Society.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

stating the present price of finals and of their Interest, and desiring to know your ultimatum on the Subject of selling or funding yours — A Broker told me yesterday that finals now sold principle for  $1 \frac{2}{3}$  and the interest for  $\frac{7}{6}$  or 8 I forget which—but then they allowed nothing for Interest since the old Congress ceased to make provision for paying interest—a bad reason Since the Congress provides for all the interest, but at 3 per cent only. I have shipped your Demijohn of French Brandy to M<sup>r</sup> Brent at Norfolk desiring him to send it to Alexandria to you—I hope to see you in a fortnight. My love to all—Your affectionate brother.

No Spanish war the 8 June but likely to be.

TO WILLIAM LEE<sup>1</sup>

NEW YORK August 8<sup>th</sup> 1790

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have this day delivered to Cap<sup>t</sup> Cary of Petersburg, who commands a Sloop between that place and this, two bales of Connecticut Linnen containing  $307\frac{1}{4}$  yards—Also two bags of feathers which required 15 yards more of the same linnen to pack them in—this addition was caused by the Shop keeper not attending to my note desiring him to let the feather bags be made of part of the 300 y<sup>ds</sup> of linnen that he was commissioned to purchase. Of the feathers there are 70 lb. neat weight. Enclosed within one of the Bales is the bed Tick, with 3 lb. of Shoe thread & 3 lb. of strong sewing thread that you desired—The linnen, both in quality and price, is as last year. The Bed

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Papers, IV. 105. Endorsed “with Bills of parcells for the goods he bought for me at New York.”

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

Tick is good, and the feathers have been examined by an honest Upholsterer here who reports them good. To pay for these goods I have drawn on M<sup>r</sup>. Thorp for twenty pounds sterling at 2 p<sup>r</sup> Cent above par. The Jamaica rum is not here on your terms, but I apprehend that you may get this Article at Norfolk as cheap and as good as here.

Cap<sup>t</sup>. Cary is a careful Man and has promised to deliver your goods under care of M<sup>r</sup>. Ambler at James Town to whom I have written requesting his attention to them, and to inform Moody of their being at J. Town. This tedious Session is to end on the 10—instant, so that I hope to be at home before the end of the month—The State debts are assumed to the amount of 21,500,000 dollars, to be funded as is the domestic debt of the U. S.—Two thirds of the principal of the domestic debt to be funded immediately at 6 p<sup>r</sup> Cent & the remaining third after 10 years at same interest—All the interest of this debt to be funded presently at 3 p<sup>r</sup> Cent—The fund for paying this is the former impost increased—provision for paying the interest of the State debts assumed will not be made until next Session, which is to meet the first Monday in december at Philadelphia

The compass of a letter does not permit me to be so particular (as you might wish) on so complex a subject as the funding system. To conversation this must be left, for I hope to see you in the Northern Neck in course of next fall. You may conclude from the interest being funded at 3 p<sup>r</sup> Cent, that this will not sell for so much as the principal. N. York Bank Stock is not easily to be had, the dividend of 7 p<sup>r</sup> Cent being paid quarterly.

Your affectionate brother,

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

	£.	s.	d.
70 lb. feathers at 2/6 . . . . .	8.	15.	0
Con. Linnen 322 1/4 y <sup>ds</sup> at 1/3 . . . . .	20.	7.	9
6 y <sup>ds</sup> Wrapper at 9 <sup>d</sup> & Cartage . . . . .	0.	5.	0
Bed Tick . . . . .	3.	15.	0
3 lb. Shoe Thread at 3/ & 3 lb. Sewing at 4/ . . . . .	1.	1.	0
A Set of blank bills . . . . .	0.	1.	0
Cartage of feathers . . . . .	0.	0.	9
	<hr/>		
	£34.	5.	6
Bill of exchange 20 [?] sterl <sup>g</sup> . . . . .	£36.	5.	4
	34.	5.	6
	<hr/>		
		1.	19. 10
freight to James Town . . . . .	0.	16.	0
	<hr/>		
N. York money due to M <sup>r</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Lee . . . . .	1.	3.	10

TO CORBIN WASHINGTON<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1790

MY DEAR SIR

I arrived here monday afternoon pretty much fatigued with my Journey—We have sent for a few peaches having none on this plantation this year—The Bearers bring near half a bottle of Tincture of Bark for my dear daughter,<sup>2</sup> and by the time that it is used we shall have more prepared for her. Poor little John was taken last night with a fever that continues yet. We

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in the *Magazine of American History*, XXII. 507.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah, second daughter of R. H. Lee, was the wife of Corbin Washington.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

have just commenced the course of broken doses of Emetic Tartar which I hope will frequently remove the fever. If you can all come up in the Boat at her return, we shall be very happy to see you. the sugar plums are ready for my dear little Richard.

I am dear sir most obediently  
yours.

CORBIN WASHINGTON ESQ  
of  
Walnut Farm.

TO [JAMES MONROE] <sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY January the 15. 1791

DEAR SIR,

I was yesterday honored with your polite and obliging letter of december the 30<sup>th</sup> last past, for which I pray you to accept my best thanks, as well as for your kind attention to my papers. I fear the state of my health, tho improving, will not permit my setting out for Congress before the last of this month—So that I can only hope to be with you early in february. If no unforeseen accident happens I shall be with you then. You are pleased to ask my opinion upon the two subjects that you state as depending before Congress—With respect to an increased duty on imported spirits, I am informed the temptation to smuggle is already so great, that in some places the smuggling of this article is much practised—And how it may be wise to tempt Men into the practise of violating law, deserves due consideration. To a reasonable & unabusive excise I have no objection. It does not appear to me that the public have any business to become Bankers, because Banks are capable of great abuses, and because such abuses practised by Govern-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Library of Congress, Monroe Papers, VII. 881. Endorsed, "relating to increased/duty on imported/spirits."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

ment, leave injured Individuals too much without redress — A very great Author has given that obvious reason why Governments should not Trade; & banking is kind of Traffic that tempts by interest to abuse — To this reason you may add, if you please, the very weighty ones to be found in M<sup>r</sup> Smiths Wealth of Nations Chapt. 2. Part 1<sup>st</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> Vol. The reasons assigned by that sensible Author against the Government of England being so engaged, must be seen by every person experienced in American Affairs, to apply here with very increased force.

I will defer what further I have to say on this and other subjects until I have the pleasure of seeing you. My respects to M<sup>rs</sup> Monroe, & to all my friends I wish to be remembered — Particularly to M<sup>r</sup> Jefferson & the Shippen family —

I am dear Sir Your affectionate friend & Servant.

TO GENERAL [JOHN ARMSTRONG?] <sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR GENERAL

CHANTILLY May 1<sup>st</sup> 1791.

Judging from my self, I think that well bottomed friendship is not to be shaken by time or accident, So that altho our Correspondence has been interrupted, I hope our friendship is not impaired. My brother M<sup>r</sup> William Lee is desirous of sending his son to the School of Carlyle in Pennsylvania. He requests that you will be so good as to inform him by Letter sent to him the next summer at the Sweet Springs in Augusta what is the charge for board and tuition of a Boy annually at the said school. And whether in your opinion the teachers at that school are properly qualified for their business. My brother William sets

<sup>1</sup>L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection. Endorsed as received and forwarded May 11, 1791.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

out for the Augusta Springs early in June in pursuit of health, and designs to carry his son from thence to the Carlyle school if your Letter encourages him to do so. I have Lately been made unhappy by understanding that your Health was in a declining way, but I shall be much gratified to hear from you that it is restored. An accident that has lately happened to my hand obliges me to be assisted by an amanuensis which your goodness will excuse.

I have the honor to be Dear Sir  
With unfeigned affection your  
friend.

TO THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN <sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

CHANTILLY Sept: 21<sup>st</sup> 1791

The letter that you had the goodness to write to me on the 11<sup>th</sup> instant. I received last evening — We all here join in thanking you for the happiness created among us by your information of the health of your Lady, yourself, and my dear Sister & brother your father and mother. It was but one copy of Anderson's history of Commerce that I desired, having no possible occasion for more. And this Copy may remain at Philadelphia until I come there, which now I expect will be about the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, when I suppose that forms will have subsided into business; the first day of the Session being the last day of October, it may be hoped that 10 days will be sufficient for the important negotiation of compliments — I am now to beg a favor of you which I hope you will have the goodness to execute for me. To engage for me a decent Lodging and as convenient to the State house as

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection. Addressed to him "at D: Shippens in Fourth/Street/Philadelphia."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

possible, that my gouty feet may sustain no injury from the wintry weather. If it can well be done, I should prefer getting my Meals where I lodge, & you will please to remember that Charles is to be provided for also. The time for entering, to be when I arrive, which I design to be about the 10<sup>th</sup> of November. I shall thank you very much for sending me a line to be left at Charles Lee's esq<sup>r</sup> in Alexandria until I pass there, informing me where my lodgings are that I may go there directly on my arrival — It will suit me well if I can hire room for 2 horses and find provender myself — And if you think that this last can be better procured now than when I come, you will greatly oblige me by engaging both Oats & Hay for my 2 horses for the probable length of the Session — The Cash shall be paid immediately on my arrival.

How are the Mighty fallen, indeed? It is not easy for a Mind of sensibility not to feel for the King & Queen of France — for the latter especially. I think with you, that few traces of wisdom are to be found in that attempt — but it is difficult to judge without knowing all circumstances. I must confess that I am not yet so *hardened* with politicks as to have lost humanity. Nor am I ashamed to own that I begin to be heartily sick of politicks & politicians.

I think that generally speaking, the former may be called the Science of fraud — and the latter, the Professors of that Science.

We are not here behind my dear Niece in love of her & her Sociable & amiable manners — To her, to your good Father Mother & Sister we present our best affections.

I am, with the truest affection yours always.

P.S. You may see that my hand has illy recovered the oversight of last Spring.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

[UNITED STATES SENATORS FROM VIRGINIA] TO  
[THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE

JA [MES] MONROE

[HENRY LEE]

PHILADELPHIA January 21<sup>st</sup> 1792

SIR,

We were duly honored, two days ago, with your Excellency's letter of the 9<sup>th</sup> instant, and its enclosures.

That the extra pay, which you have so properly contended for, ought to be reimbursed, seems perfectly just; and we shall accordingly urge it to the proper power.

As yet, a Militia bill has not been introduced to either house. When such a bill shall appear, we will exert ourselves to get a clause inserted that may prevent similar discussions in future. Your Excellency shall be informed how we succeed in both these objects.

Much time has been employed upon the Representative bill, which has finally been lost, by its being insisted that the Ratio should be 33,000, instead of 30,000. A second bill is now pending in the House of Representatives, which we hope will terminate, we might say, more Constitutionally than was before insisted on. The evident effect of which, would have been to abridge the representation of the South, and add to that of the north.

We thank you Sir for the good opinion that you are pleased to entertain of our attachment to the interest of our Country, and we hope to confirm you therein, by our attention to whatever business you shall think proper to commit to our care.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. by Lee. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dreer Collection, III. 64. Signed also in autograph by Monroe.

[THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

We have the honor to be, with the most respectful consideration, Sir Your Excellencies most obedient & very hble Servants.

[UNITED STATES SENATORS FROM VIRGINIA] TO  
[THE] GOVERNOR [OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD HENRY LEE  
JA[ME]S MONROE

HENRY LEE

PHILADELPHIA Feb. 14th 1792

SIR,

We have been duly honored with your Excellency's dispatches covering resolves of the Legislature respecting certain military claims of Land, and others for services and supplies not yet compensated. The former we have, in the first instance, committed to the care of our Countrymen in the House of representatives, where this subject is to come under consideration. The latter we have referred to Colo. Davies, whose most accurate knowledge of these things will enable us to pursue such ulterior measures as may be most proper.

We have lately seen published in a Gazette of this city, two resolves of our Assembly — one charging us to renew our endeavors for opening the doors of the Federal Senate, and the other concerning a certain article in the Treaty of Peace with G. Britain. As we have yet seen them nowhere but in the newspaper, we must remain quiescent until we are honored with information on these points from our Executive.

We have the honor to be, with great respect & esteem,

Your Excellency's most obedient servants.

<sup>1</sup> From the text printed in *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, V. 443.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [GENERAL HENRY LEE]<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA March 25. 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,

I think you are a letter in my debt, however that is a trifle among friends, and perhaps it might have been many more if my time had not been most laboriously engaged with Congressional affairs, and most of all with the Representatives bill. It was an endless work almost, to pursue thro the various de-tours and meandering in this business — The bill has finally past the 2 houses, by which Virginia has 21 Members & Kentucky 2 — but 6 eastern States have one a piece more than they ought, Jersey & Delaware the same, and N & S. Carolina each 1 more also than these States would any of them have had, if the plain Constitutional mode had been pursued of dividing the number of people in each *State Respectively* by the agreed Ratio of 30,000 But by a certain Arithmetico political Sophistry an arrangement of 6 to 2 in favor of the North against the South has been made of the 8 Members gained by this Sophism — They first divide the whole or aggregate number of the people in the U. S. by 30,000, which produces 120 members instead of 112 which would have come from dividing the people in each State by 30,000 — leaving large fractions with some States. After having obtained the 120 Members they apply different Ratios to different States so as to give one Member for that Ratio which in each, should approach nearest to 1 for 30,000 and leaving smaller fractions. This ingenious Theory may hereafter change when the fractional application shall be found to benefit the South as now it does the North. For then it may appear improper, tho now it does

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Myers Collection, "Distinguished Americans," No. 828.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

not, to change a Real into a Virtual Representation so far as fractions are employed. This bill went by a Majority of 1 in the Senate and 2 in the H. of R. three of the Members of the latter against it being Sick, or out of the way.

I do apprehend, however, that when a full representation comes into the two houses after the next election, that all this arithmetical sophistry will vanish before truth and the Constitution, as Mists are dispersed by the rising Sun. This Bill, that for the frontier defence, and the Post Office bill being past, and the Militia an[d] Coinage bills in great forwardness, we may rise by the Middle of April, which will give time enough for the Ways & Means bill — But I fear the Speculators will agitate a fresh Assumption which they are very intent upon, but which hitherto they have not ventured to bring forth from out of the Treasury Report. Gen. Knox told us the other day that the extra pay of our Militia the last year would be all allowed except about 230 dollars which would require a legislative provision, and that he thought it would not be worth while to apply for it. The list of Claims remain yet with Col<sup>o</sup> Davis, who has waited for a bill now passed for removing the limitation law two years to come, which will let in the greater part of them — Such as are founded on ideas not warranted by the former Acts of Congress, the Legislature will not now open a door for the admission of, apprehending a great increase of the public debt thereby. The Military Claim of Land South of Ohio yet lays before the house of Representatives, and I fear that the violation of an Indian Treaty in the present Critical State of Indian Affairs will prevent anything effectual from being now done in that business. A prodigious Shock has lately assailed the Speculators, and Stocks of all kinds wonderfully fallen, but I fancy the Spirit will soon

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

again revive, for I see that 26/ is now offered for 6 p<sup>er</sup> Cents payable & deliverable in January next. An Amazing profit this to those who have money, for at this Moment the same 6 p<sup>er</sup> Cents may be purchased for 21/9 and sold directly again with 9 Months credit for 26/ —

Who shall be Commander in Chief of the Western Expedition is now a matter of Town talk — They say it will lay between yourself — Gen Putnam, General Pinkney, & Gen. Wayne — Nothing transpires from the Cabinet. Your friends are clear for you, but each has his Partisans. I do not know where to direct the enclosed so that it may soon reach my brother, and I wish him to get it as quickly as possible. I have therefore taken the liberty of enclosing it to you, and request that you will have the goodness to contrive it to him with all the expedition in your power.

I am, with great affection,  
Yours sincerely.

Remember me cordially to my friends in Richmond among whom I count particularly M<sup>r</sup> Marshall, the Treasurer, M<sup>r</sup> Harvey with Col<sup>o</sup> Carrington. —

TO WILLIAM LEE<sup>1</sup>

PHILADELPHIA April 7. 1792

MY DEAR BROTHER,

You will receive enclosed Cap<sup>t</sup> Sheppards bill of Loading for 24 Windsor Chairs, a box of dry goods and a Keg of Tea — The contents of the box are noted on a paper also enclosed. I have addressed these things to M<sup>r</sup> James Young of Gosport as you desired, and I have written to him to pay the freight when

<sup>1</sup>A. L. S. Virginia Historical Society, Lee Papers, IV. 95.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

delivered, & to forward them with all expedition to Williamsburg. Sheppard has promised me to call & deliver them, with some things for myself. This Vessel belongs properly, either to Petersburg or Richmond, and the Skipper appears to be a careful Man—I have sent M<sup>r</sup> Young a duplicate bill of Loading—I will, as you desire, deliver the Conveyance of my Potomac Share to the Agent of the company as I pass thro Alexandria, and forward to you, when I have time, a copy of it. We shall adjourn before the last of this Month—

The president has refused his Assent to the Bill apportioning Representatives by applying the Ratio to the Aggregate number of people in the U. S. as Unconstitutional, so that now that business must be put on its proper footing, to the great regret of those North of us who have used infinite pains to carry their plan thro the houses—The further assumption of State debts has been Negatived in the H. of R. but still they mean to make another effort—I hope to be at home by the 10<sup>th</sup> of May at furthest.

Yours affectionately.

TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
[OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY October the 8<sup>th</sup> 1792

SIR,

It is not in my power to convey to you an adequate idea of the regret I feel at being compelled by the feeble state of my health to retire from the service of my Country. The strong sense that I entertain of public duty, joined to a deep feeling of gratitude for the reit-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection. Addressed to him "at/Richmond."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

erated goodness of the General Assembly to me, would render the toils of public business a pleasure, altho I am grown gray in the service of my Country ; were I not prevented by infirmities that can only be relieved by a quiet retirement. Thus urged Sir, I entreat you to lay me, with all possible duty and thankfulness before the Representatives of my Country, and present them this my resignation of my Senators place in the Senate of the United States, which I beg their favorable acceptance of. That the unqualified liberty of our Country may be perpetual, and its prosperity great as its freedom, will be the Constant prayer of Sir Your most obedient and most humble Servant.

Honorable the Speaker  
of the House of Representatives }

TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
[OF VIRGINIA] <sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, 5th November, 1792.

SIR,

I have been duly honoured with the letter (and its enclosure) that you were pleased to write to me on the eighteenth October. I pray you, sir, to assure the honourable House of Delegates, that I feel the deepest sense of gratitude and obligation for the good opinion that they are pleased to entertain of my services, and for the condescending and obliging wish that they express for the future prospects of my life. I have ever thought, that the best reward for public service, is the approbation of our country ; and surely examples like this are wisely fitted to encourage patriotic zeal, and to support the servants of the public, through the perplexing intricacies of political life. To you, sir, my

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 243.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

thanks are particularly due, for the very polite and affectionate manner in which you have been so good as to convey to me the sense of the House.

I have the honour to be, with all possible respect, sir, your most obliged and most obedient servant,

Honourable the Speaker of the  
House of Delegates.

TO THE SPEAKER OF THE SENATE [OF VIRGINIA]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY, 5th November, 1792.

SIR,

I have received the letter you did me the honour to write to me, on the twenty-third of October, with the resolve enclosed therein. Be so good, sir, as to present my duty to the Senate, and assure that honourable body that I feel, as I ought to do, the highest sense of obligation for the honour conferred upon me, by the manner in which they have been pleased to express their sense of my services, and for the obliging wish, they have expressed, for the future happiness of my life. I wish it may be the good fortune of those who follow me, to serve masters willing to crown their

<sup>1</sup> From R. H. Lee, *Memoir of Richard Henry Lee*, I. 244. This letter was in answer to the following resolution of the Virginia Senate :

“OCTOBER 22d, 1792.

*In Senate.*

*Resolved unanimously,* That the speaker be desired to convey to Richard Henry Lee, Esq. the respects of the Senate ; that they sincerely sympathize with him in those infirmities which have deprived their country of his valuable services ; and that they ardently wish he may, in his retirement, with uninterrupted happiness, close the evening of a life, in which he hath so conspicuously shone forth as a statesman and a patriot ; that while mindful of his many exertions to promote the public interests, *they are particularly thankful for his conduct, as a member of the Legislature of the United States.*”



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

labours, by bestowing upon them a reward so respectable as I have been favoured with.

I thank you, sir, for the kind manner of conveying to me the sense of the Senate; and I remain, with the highest respect, sir, your most obedient and very humble servant,

Honourable the Speaker of the Senate,

TO MISS LUCINDA LEE<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY January 10. 1793

MY DEAR NIECE,

You have no doubt, long before this, heard of the death of your Uncle, and my most dear brother Arthur Lee Esq<sup>r</sup>. As he has left me his sole Executor, it is incumbent on me to inform you of the following clause in your Uncle's Will in your favor "I give to my Niece Lucinda Lee one-half acre Lott in Alexandria lying on Duke & St. Asaph streets, and let on ground rents to her and her heirs forever."

I should have sent you the Title papers by this opportunity if I had thought it a perfectly secure one. But this may now be the less necessary as this letter will enable you to order a collection of such rents as have become due since your Uncle's death. And Mr. Charles Lee can, from the description above, point out to you who the Tenents are. The rents that were due before your Uncle's death Mr. Irvine has power from me to collect for the use of the Estate. I am a stranger to the state of the Tenants on this Legacy but I am informed that the Tenants on it pay a ground rent of about £62. annually. And I think that one Lott is unrented at present, it having been

<sup>1</sup> Transcript. Virginia Historical Society, V. 65. Addressed to her at "Berry Hill/in/Stafford Cty," and sent by "Anthony."

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

reentered by my brother for defect of rent not paid. This when rented will add to the above rents of £62.— Be so good as give my love to my very dear Niece, Mrs. Brent and tell her that I should have written to her if my health had permitted, but I have much to do and am not well. Her Uncle has left her “A piece of Plate (of the value of twenty Guineas) as she may Chuse.” She may either have the twenty guineas to dispose of as she chuses, or if she prefer pointing out the piece of plate to me, I will order it from London.

Remember me very affectionately to your dear Mother and tell her that we have here a very high sense of her goodness in going up to stay with our much loved daughter in Alexandria during her approaching confinement.<sup>1</sup> I am my dear Niece your very sincerely affectionate Uncle & friend.

### TO JOHN HOPKINS :

CHANTILLY March 24<sup>th</sup> 1793

SIR,

Having received your favor enclosing M<sup>r</sup>. Lee's order on M<sup>r</sup>. R. B. Lee and the Title for the two negroes I do now herein enclose your promisory note for the said papers &<sup>3</sup> the receipt for them [and] for the Stocks.

I am, with regard, Sir your most obedient Servant.

<sup>1</sup> Anne, Mrs. Charles Lee, whose third child was born in 1793.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. New York Public Library (Lenox Foundation), Ford Collection. Addressed to him as “Treasurer of Loans/at/Richmond.”

<sup>3</sup> An illegible word probably “for,” is here erased.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY April 15. 1793

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

Your favor of March 17, has not been answered so soon as it would otherwise have been, because it was rendered partly unnecessary by the letter I had written to you just before the receipt of it, and because my continued feeble state of health renders writing painful to me. I hope for better health as the warm weather comes forward and permits more regular exercise. I observe by the letter I am now replying to, that you had been misinformed in many respects concerning my late dear brother. And this you will have seen by the date of his Will which was made some months before your return from this State, and not "in his last moments," but 4 or 5 months before his death, in perfect health, and at his own house. Why this change with respect to you it is impossible for me to tell, any more than I can account for the same omission of my daughter Molly who was known to be a favorite Niece of his, and whom he had in former Wills handsomely provided for! Unless her marriage with a gentleman of wealth induced a belief that she was sufficiently provided for. You will have observed that he has particularly noticed every one of her Sisters. From my return to Virginia to the date of his Will I never saw him but once, & then for a very short time and in much company. You mention 2 or 3 small bills that have been presented to you against him since his death, some for Taxes & some from Tradesmen. But you are not pleased to say who are the Tradesmen and what the nature & amount of their demands. When I reflect on my brothers singular punctuality in the payment of his debts, and the aptitude of some Men to revive dis-

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

charged claims, I own that I am disposed to doubt of these, until legal, i.e. impartial proof is produced. With respect to the Taxes they shall be paid, and so you please inform the Collector. There is money belonging to the Estate in Phil<sup>a</sup> and I have written to my worthy friend, Tench Coxe Esq<sup>r</sup> and to M<sup>r</sup> Wells Cashier of the Bank for information what testimonials or verifications I must send to the Treasury & the Bank of my being duly qualified as my brothers Executor and legal Representative. The Certificate of the Clerk of the Court where Wills are by law proved & recorded answers all purposes of verification in our Courts of Justice. If such a Certificate further sanctioned by a Notary public would suffice to enable me to do business with the Treasury & the Bank, it will save me much Trouble, and indeed I am very little able to travel far in search of testimonials that are in this case more formal than necessary. Will you have the goodness to consult M<sup>r</sup> Secretary Hamilton, M<sup>r</sup> Coxe & M<sup>r</sup> Wells on this subject and quickly let me know the result. What can be done with the Lot near you, so as at least not to let it be expensive or rendered worse by ill treatment before your Infant Cousin becomes of Age?

I join heartily with you in deploring the fate of Louis — His death, with the lights I have, was cruel, unnecessary and highly impolitic — But if I mistake not, either M<sup>r</sup> Burke or some other Writer, predicted this very early, as a conclusion that w<sup>d</sup> be come to by the ambition & avarice of the democratic faction, even at the moment of their affecting high attachment to the Constitution as originally formed. The vengeance of heaven may slumber a while, but I think it will sound terribly, e'er long, in the ears, hearts, & on the heads of these Murderers. I had a deep rooted affection for this good King because he so effectually aided us in

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

the day of our distress. and I will say with Queen Elizabeth — “God may forgive his Murderers, but I never can” — All decency & justice are outraged, if it be true, that these same Jacobins have Confiscated all the British & Dutch trading Vessels that they had embargoed in the ports of France previous to their declaration of War! This is robbery & piracy with a vengeance — It is to be hoped that the British Lion will claw these fellows handsomely for their misdoing.

M<sup>rs</sup> Chantilly<sup>1</sup> has been very ill, but I thank God she is now<sup>2</sup> recovering — the rest are well & we all heartily join in love for our dear Relations in Phil<sup>a</sup> — Remember me to all our friends

I am my dear Nephew Your ever affectionate Uncle & friend.

What is the now price of 6 p<sup>t</sup> Cents & what the best judgm[ent]<sup>3</sup> concerning the cause of the strange fall, or future Rise — My last married daughter<sup>4</sup> is yet unportioned — I want to sell Stock for her —

TO DOCT[OR] WILLIAM SHIPPEN, JR.<sup>5</sup>

CHANTILLY April 29<sup>th</sup> 1793

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is I believe very certain that the friendships of the world are very often destroyed by passion; by want of candid and fair discussion: and among Relations for want of that affectionate and friendly explanation<sup>6</sup> so

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, Mrs. R. H. Lee.

<sup>2</sup> A word which appears to be “slowly” is here erased.

<sup>3</sup> Ms. damaged.

<sup>4</sup> Anne, Mrs. Charles Lee.

<sup>5</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Substituted for “discussion” erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

necessary for the right settlement of points in controversy or dispute. I trust that this will never be the fate of our friendship, and it is upon this principle that I now state to you your account with our late brother Arthur Lee deceased. The items of the account (a very few small articles of charge excepted which are stated in M<sup>r</sup> Lees books by himself) are taken from Accounts and Letters in your own handwriting, & I have given you credit for every article of charge agst M<sup>r</sup> Lee that you have made yourself, and divers others not mentioned by you, but stated by M<sup>r</sup> Lee himself. Upon all your Credits I have allowed Interest from their commencement to the last period of making up this <sup>a</sup>/<sub>c</sub>—I have continued your charge for £28. 2. 6 paid to Bailey, altho M<sup>r</sup> A. Lee notes his absolute refusal of it because he says the printing was without his knowledge, order, or consent.

M<sup>r</sup> Broom charges M<sup>r</sup> Lee for the money p<sup>d</sup> you in 1783 June 23<sup>d</sup> by Recpt. But as you, in your account do not acknowledge this Sum until the following year, I have charged no interest tho' your discounts do not begin until a year after receiving the money by M<sup>r</sup> Brooms account. An account thus fairly & favorably stated cannot fail to be approved, & I think that established as it is, by Vouchers from yourself, there can be no doubt of its authenticity. I can only add, that if it is convenient for you to pay it, twill be infinitely so for me to receive it. But if it is at present inconvenient for you to pay the principal, send me your bond & pay punctually the interest, and I will wait with patience,

Be so good as write me fully on this subject, directing your letter to be forwarded from Fredericksburg by Cross post, down the Northern Neck. Who is now the Cashier of the B of N. A — I have written to M<sup>r</sup> Wells long since, but can get no answer. Our best

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

love attends you & your household, and also our friends in 4<sup>th</sup> Street & Germantown.

I am most sincerely & affectionately your friend.  
Account on the other Side.<sup>1</sup>

TO GENERAL OTHO WILLIAMS<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY IN VIRG<sup>a</sup> JUNE 22<sup>d</sup> 1793

SIR,

Having found it very difficult to dispose of our grain and furnish our family supplies in this retired part of the Northern Neck, my friends, neighbors, and Sons in Law, Col<sup>o</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Augustine Washington & Corbin Washington; & myself determined to purchase a small Vessel in partnership for the above purposes. And lately we bought the Schooner Betsey,<sup>3</sup> of Vienna in your State, from M<sup>r</sup> Henry Lake. And it happening that the Skipper whom we intended for her Commander was under inoculation for the Small pox, we were constrained to employ a protempore Skipper to carry a load of Corn & pease to Baltimore before harvest. Intending, immediately on her return, to put our proper Commander on board, and take out a New Register with his Name therein — For this Trip therefore she still goes under her former Register, with her unexpired years Licence. We have none of us, the present Owners, been ever before concerned with Craft, so that it may be possible that some undesigned, unknowing mistake may

<sup>1</sup> This account is not in Richard Henry Lee's handwriting, but it has his autograph signature as "Executor." The account covers a period from November 7, 1781, and shows a balance due the estate of Arthur Lee decd. of £ 1662. 7. 7.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. S. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Etting Collection, No. 24. General Williams was at this time Collector of the Customs at Baltimore, Maryland.

<sup>3</sup> The letter was sent by this schooner.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

have been made in her sailing papers. We hope however, that should it be so, we may not suffer for our want of knowledge in this line of business — We intended to new christen her, when we got a New Register, and name her “The Three Friends,” but we are told that she *must* continue in her Old Name. I shall thank you Sir for information on this point, and what sailing papers it may be necessary for her to carry in her usual trips from State to State, or the Same State, or an adjoining State. I am sure your goodness will excuse this trouble from one [who] will at all times be happy to serve you. I am with particular esteem and regard,  
Sir Your most obedient Servant.

TO [THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN ?]<sup>1</sup>

CHANTILLY 11<sup>th</sup> december 1793

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

May be perfectly sure that there must have been very satisfactory reason for his letter by my Son, Aug<sup>t</sup> 20<sup>2</sup> remaining so long unanswered. I had no doubt but that you had left Philadelphia to avoid the dreadful plague that so severely visited the City, but since you had not informed me of the place of your retreat, I was absolutely at a loss to know where to direct for you. As I do not suppose that your discretion will permit you to be so very early in your return to Town as I observe some of the fugitives have been, because of remaining infection continuing until heavy rains, cold and cleansing winds shall have purified the air of the City from the malignant poison with which it has abounded. God grant that none of our friends may have suffered from this plague.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. S. Shippen Collection.

<sup>2</sup> This may possibly be “28.”

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

But you really delay my happiness by delaying to inform me that the "tremendous abscess" which prevented your progress eastward has been effectually removed. This being done, it is possible that your constitution may be invigorated, by the purification it must have undergone. When you give me the pleasure just now solicited, I shall thank you for a minute detail of all that Congress have done in the affair of Genet. If something effectual is not done in that business farewell forever to the respectability and dignity of our government. I have no doubt, but that if one half of what has been done here had been practised at Constantinople — The Delegate would quickly have had a place in the prison of the Seven Towers.

It seems to me that every latter issue from that source out-tops greatly what went before in folly & scurrility. Do you not think that rude & shocking indecencies<sup>1</sup> has [have] been completely mistaken for courage? For what are prosecutions to [avail] against Mess<sup>rs</sup> Jay & King, when the Mans own letters, published by himself, contain ideas exactly the same with the publication objected to. And so nineteenth twentieths of the Americans will surely agree. You know that once a french Minister (Duke de Choiseul) wishing to gratify a paltry malice, obtained a declaration from a french Academy that *Imperial Majesty* was not good french — Armed with this authority the Minister refused, what the rest of Europe granted, to acknowledge that Title assumed by the present Empress of Russia — Perhaps the Jacobins in France have obtained from the same respectable source a Commission for the Delegate declaring that he alone understands our language & that it must be presumption in any to discover

<sup>1</sup>The four preceding words are substituted for "impudence" erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

similar ideas where there may be any difference or dissimilitude of language: It being known to all who understand English, especially to the Possessor of the above commission, that no two english words can be found that convey the same idea. This point being secured, if any American shall presume to understand his native language, and to discover in the Delegates publication the very ideas precisely, tho differently worded, & more larded with Sophistry; he shall for his audacity be prosecuted by the Attorney General of the U. S. under a Mandamus from the self erected Foreign Sovereign of this Union. We have already seen attempts made & proposals come forward to engross the time of Congress, of the federal Court, & of other Courts with the frivolous fancies of this delegate. In fact, I believe that nothing in diplomatic history can be found, equal to the public disturbance that has been excited by this man; who, when first he arrived here, found such universal and cordial attachment to his Nation; that the enthusiasm was so boundless as to carry the people into a practise new & equally improper, that was, to carry Addresses to the Plenipotentiary; a practise that he knows, is not in use among the most polished & civilized Nations of Europe. But this person, even before his credentials were presented & admitted, whilst yet no more than a private Man, began to assume powers & practises that nothing could justify, a <sup>1</sup> rude and violent breach of hospitality, that being practised here, in a Neutral Country afforded *Causa belli* to all the powers at war with France — This he either knew, or ought to have known, to be in direct opposition to his duty. It is very remarkable that two American Citizens, Hodge & Cunninghame, were imprisoned in France in the year 1776 or 77 for doing the same thing — to wit for fitting out a Privateer

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “being a” erased.



## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE.

in France, & they were compelled to deliver up their prizes to the English. The commerce of these Southern States nearly ruined by the piracies of these Vessels — These things, & the extravagant & boundless indecencies offered to the Government were causes equal to the extraordinary effect that has taken place — to wit the detestation of every unruined & impartial American nearly. I have troubled you so far, because we have been used to discourse of politics together, & because I solemnly think the dignity & independence of our Country is committed unless proper measures are taken with this Man —

I shall be glad to have your opinion which always hath great weight with me. Pray is it true as suggested in the Newspapers that the Misbehavior of the Plenepo caused him to be driven from Poland?

The Presidents Speech appears to me to be well conceived, considering the factious fractious spirit with which some among us appear to be animated, it was certainly wise to take the judgement of Congress, which judgement, although it will not stop the Ravings of some evil Spirits, it will render their effusions harmless — Indeed they are pretty much so at present, altho the Press has teemed here (under the Signitures of Agricola, plain Republican, true Republican &c &c) <sup>1</sup>

TO RICHARD BLAND LEE <sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY feby 5<sup>th</sup> 1794

MY DEAR SIR.

Your very friendly and flattering Letter, has been three posts in my possession; yet such has been the

<sup>1</sup> The remainder of the Ms. is missing.

<sup>2</sup> L. S. Shippen Collection. Addressed to him at Philadelphia. He was a Representative to Congress from Virginia.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

situation of my health, that tho' I felt continually the deepest regret at not being able to Answer it by each post as the day came, I could not execute my wishes — Non sum qualis eram is Indeed true with me. The operations of the mind deeply affect my feble frame, so that mental processes are with me necessarily slow. Altho' at a time, and under circumstances, of life, when other Men as well as Solomon discovers the vanity of Earthly things, yet it is not easy to be quite unaffected by the judgment, that an able man shall form of ones conduct & character. You are certainly not mistaken in your opinion that I love my Country — This passion (if it may be so called) has been deeply engraved upon my mind soon after it became capable of reflection. And perhaps it may be owing to this love of my Country with opportunities of knowledge furnished by long & attentive public service together with that period of life when *Confidence is a plant of slow growth*; that I politically differ from some persons whose opinion on any other occasion would command the most respectful attention. I confess myself happy to find among nine out of 10 with whom I have had an opportunity of conversing a similarity of opinion concerning the fittest course that the U. S. may pursue in the actual state of their political affairs. I solemnly think it must be difficult for Men who really love their Country, who are of independent Circumstances who are candid, temperate & sensible, to vary much in Judgment. Observe a strict and faithful neutrality — Justly offend none — And let these be scrupulously & steadily enforced within the limits of the U. States, which<sup>1</sup> was most wisely & seasonably enjoined by the Presidents Proclamation. When the passions of men run high, when the jealousy of Nations is great beyond former examples 'tis certainly not the Season for partial,

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for "this" erased.

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oppressive, & hostile Commercial Regulations to be legalized by us, in favor of some & hurtful to others of the Belligerent Powers. Partialities at all times give offence, generalities seldom do — In a discussion of this kind I profess that I know no country but the U. S. and their true, certain & general interest, not their intemperate passions, or partial views with respect to advantages of one part, over another of the Union. In the ordinary affairs of Jurisprudence; conjectures, suspicions, circumstances unnaturally forced into union by heated imaginations are not proofs upon which the justice of Courts is administered — Far less, it should be supposed, may such shadows be substantiated into proofs for bringing War the schorge of Nations, upon our country, yet having under the oppressive load of debt created by the last War. The Historian of Queen Elizabeth mentions to her praise, that when she received *real* injuries from any of her Neighbors, she urged no complaints presently but diligently proceeded to fill her Exchequer to be compitent in Men & Ships, when & not till then did she demand unequivical redress, or her Resentment was quickly followed with effectual blows. I observe it is a fundamental with Mons<sup>r</sup> Genets Masters to take “Steps to Act effecatiiously against Eng<sup>d</sup> & Spain” — And they have my full & free consent to exert all their powers for this purpose, abstaining from the practice of Every Art to draw us into a Ruinous War, where everything may be lost & nothing can posibly be gained — And why, because the instructions say that we are an Object with these powers as well as them — Probabilities then, are to Excite our Zeal in entering upon a War that must inevitably put our existence, as a free people, to the most eminent hazard. But really the conduct of the french Partizans in this business is to plunge us into this most fatal & unnecessary War by every

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possible art, *Flectere si nequeo superos Acheronta movebo*. If a majority see not the propriety — of engaging in War (with many puissant Nations) without money Men, Ships or Munitions of war — at a time when the debts of last War are not yet sufficiently provided for — when we are borrowing from Peter to pay Paul, & when we are sorely pressed by this very National Assembly. (That would, have us sacrifice every thing for them) to pay most scrupulously (sic) the money charged to us by the late government of France, and of which a great part was paid in France to French contractors very oppressively & uselessly to us in such military stores as were literally good for nothing. When such powerful prohibition stare them in the face, the business must be next assayed by circuitous<sup>1</sup> not direct modes — Associations and partial great oppressions are by law to be placed upon the Nations particularly denounced by the french Assembly. At a moment when the most stupid cant fail to see that the Design goes Directly to benefit one party in the War & to injure others in direct violation of neutrality. If this, in temperate times would be considered only in the light of malignant ill will, in the present temper of Mind that so unfortunately prevails, I much doubt if it would not be deemed *Causa belli*. But 'tis said this is merely a commercial Regulation to benefit our own Trade by affecting that of others. It is unlucky for this argument that this same plan has been already rejected by Congress at a time when no such hurtful & Malign partiality was reasonably to be Charged upon it — And when the thing itself is a mere theoretic opinion; when great numbers as well instructed upon this subject as the projectors of the plan, consider it a Measure at present, & which for a great length of time must be, fatal to Southern Agriculture — I have no Doubt but that

<sup>1</sup> Written over "circumstances," the latter part of which is erased.



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our Trade is highly<sup>1</sup> beneficial to Great Britain. As little do I Doubt of the British, Trade being greatly useful to Southern Agriculture ; which must languish and be fatally Discouraged by any measure that should deprive us of that Trade. Commerce is a subject of too delicate a nature to be coerced by the Theoretic ideas of bookish men—I suppose it will be granted that no nation better understands, Commerce than the English—And I think it may of them be affirmed with truth, that they make no essential changes in their Commerce by law, without consulting with Merchants of the greatest probity<sup>2</sup> & experience in the United kingdom—They dont depend on knowledge drawn alone from their Libraries, So that the judgment of a very great statesman (Richelieu) is not here a censure upon them—\* The Cardinal says “ La capacité des Conseillers ne requert pas une capacité pédantesque, il n’y a rien de plus dangereux pour l’Etat que ceux qui veulent gouverner les Royaumes par les maximes qu’ils tirent de leurs livres. Ils les ruinent souvent tout-a-fait par ce moyen.”<sup>3</sup> The present, as you very properly state it, is a most interesting scene—A conduct sincerely void of offence to any of the Warring powers by observing a true & honest Neutrality—And if such proofs are produced of injury offered by other Nations as a good & wise man would think deserved National vengeance firm & Decent remonstrances accompanied by such proofs, if they failed of success, would put such offenders so palpably in the wrong as to justify the strongest measures on our part in the Judgment of Mankind—It is surely a very great advantage in War to have a United Nation & the

<sup>1</sup> Written over “greatly.”

<sup>2</sup> The word “Ability” is here erased.

<sup>3</sup> This entire passage from the asterisk is in the handwriting of Richard Henry Lee, but the rest of the letter is written by an amanuensis.



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good opinion of Mankind attending our measures. But whether directly, or by means more remote, we engage in or provoke a War and under the actual circumstances of the U. States I am slow in thinking that a quarter of our Countrymen would go along with the promoters of such a war, & Impartial nations might find reason to censure our want of policy & humanity. You may judge therefore, my dear Sir, that thinking as I do, it gives me<sup>1</sup> pain to find it your opinion that "it seems to be uncertain Whether the folly & wickedness of the Courts of Great Britain & Spain — The intemperance of France, or our own want of patience & moderation will not produce so calamitous an event"! The interest of the two former above all the nations of the Earth, is so obviously & powerfully opposed to war with us, that I should think Credulity personified, would not entertain the idea of these nations desiring such a War — The two last causes stated by you are of a nature more serious. Yet I have so strong a reliance on the patriotic wisdom & firmness of our Executive — And upon the Patriotism goodsense, & penetration of a very great Majority of the good people of this Union, as to entertain no Idea that any measure direct or indirect, will be suffered to take effect that may possibly produce so calamitous *an event* as you very properly term the ruinous business. I have already observed that in a discussion of this kind I know no Country but the United States & Also, that particular powers were specially denounced by the french Assembly — Pursuing the first idea, I shall at all times consider Truth & true Reflections as my Proper guides, regardless of any mistakes or intemperance that may influence contrary opinions. The second will be found to result from the very extraor-

<sup>1</sup> The word "great" is here erased.

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dinary instructions published by M<sup>r</sup> Genet. I trust that I am too well known in these States for it to be unknown that so long as War existed between these States & Great Britain the latter had not a more determined foe than myself—. Since peace has been concluded I have endeavored in all my public conduct to shew that I disapprove a hostile mind in peace. I confess I know not how otherwise peace shall ever take place between Nations once unfortunately at War— Yet it is well known that there are always numbers on both sides who on such occasions, for Private interest, (tho' formidable only for diligence in wicked intrigue) exert every talent they possess to keep up the ball of enmity, expecting thereby wealth & honours due only to virtue & ability. It is an old observation that family feuds & Civil wars are with most difficulty removed & friendship Restored; it may therefore be supposed, that from this cause, & the wicked agency above stated that much ill-will rankled in the Breasts of some on both sides, after the peace, which in all probability has so long prevented an accommodation reasonable, just, & satisfactory to both Countries—I must confess that since M<sup>r</sup> Adams demanded the delivery of the posts and the Answer of the British Ministry, with the subsequent Measures of Congress thereupon I did suppose that Court sincerely determined to Deliver the Posts up so soon as the Laws restraining the recovery of B. Debts should be removed—At least the sincerity of that Court would have been brought to the Test.—I believe this objection was never removed until last Fall when I hear the Federal Court gave judgments for such debts & it is rumored that the British are now busily building forts in their own Territory near ours—which looks like a Design of complying with their Faith engaged—When I was in the public Counsels I

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remember many accounts of Indian hostility encouraged, protected & aided by the B. Government. I also remember that upon enquiry these changes were contradicted & I never heard of their being verified — The Algerines I well know have Wared on our Trade from the commencement of our Independence — But allow me to ask if they do not the same upon the Commerce of Europe where annual Stipends are not paid — And these stipends very unwillingly paid by many Nations far our superior now in Naval force. I have understood that France & G. Britain are the two general supporters of these infamous Pirates, nothing to their honour I confess. With respect to any late urging of Algiers against us or fomenting of Indian hostility I know nothing but I have been informed by respectable authorities of our own that we were treated with great civility & respect by the British during the late Indian Treaty.—I do very well recollect that whilst I was in Congress, & Commercial partialities similar to those now under consideration were proposed, a Gentleman produced from the English Statute book a variety of cases in which the Trade of the United States was favored in G. Britain beyond that of any other Nation. The W. Indies indeed is not open to our carrying Trade, but are we much better treated by France? I do not know that we are — Soon after the revolution in France we heard it was proposed to Extend privileges to our Trade with the West Indies but has it been done? the Instructions say that if we will enter into a War with almost all the powers in Europe (for I think that warring with two of these<sup>1</sup> Allies is warring with the Whole) we shall have privileges in the West Indies made at some time or other, & to an Extent not mentioned — A shadow truly for a very weighty substance —

<sup>1</sup> Substituted for “three” erased.

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With respect to Spain, you seem to think that the Conduct of that Court relative to the Navigation of the Mississippi is new — Look if you please at the Secret Journals of Congress in 1786 & onwards — you will there find it to be an Original objection on their part, & it seems to grow out of a National jealousy extended to all Nations, against any nearer approximation to their Southern Riches — But this instance excepted, I know of no Nation that has more uniformly shewn these States friendship & Respect. I remember, that in our greatest adversity, when Congress was compelled in Winter 1776 to leave Phil<sup>a</sup> for Baltimore we had authentic information that Spain by an Edict permitted our Privateers to Carry their prizes into Spain — When later in the following year the French committed Hodge & Cunninghame two American Citizens to prison for bringing their Prizes into France & made them Deliver them up to the English — We know that early in the War, upon an application of Gen<sup>l</sup> Lee the spanyards granted us the aid we desired — The General friendly conduct of Spain to the U. States evidently arises from her interest to be well with us and as far as I was acquainted with their Conduct whilst I was engaged in public affairs, that Court appeared to me to understand this policy & to act upon it. A change in the political conduct of these Nations at this time becoming more enomical<sup>1</sup> to us, is so irreconcilable to common sense, to say nothing of the policy of the measure, that really it seems to me to demand the most clear and unequivocal proof of facts alleged in the first place, an explanation of such change of conduct desired; & finally a due consideration of the nature of the Charges if proved whether they be of such a nature as directly or indirectly to justify War, the greatest of all civil calamities. — And to us at this time, certain ruin.

<sup>1</sup> Inimical.



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Perhaps a solution of these charges against Spain & England, & the wonderful industry with which they have been propagated, may be found in the policy of the French Rulers. — To ask us to go to war at once with 5 powerful nations of Europe might be in vain, but two of the 5 have unsettled Disputes with the U. States which perhaps rankling a little in the mind will cause more easy credence to charges propagated & give a greater facility to procuring War Direct or circuitously against two, as it may not be immediately reflected on, that in a War like this, to quarrel with one is to War with all. — The probability of this arises from the instructions where it is said, “We have at this moment a particular interest in taking steps to act efficaciously against England & Spain, we ought to excite by all possible means the Zeal of the Americans &c. &c.” the reasons to be sure are strong for that being, “a great people we should suspend our Commercial & political Interest & establish a mutual understanding &c. &c. —” We are indeed tempted by Reward promised & which fairly translated into English may read thus, We have in the zenith of our Madness made War upon all the powers of Europe nearly, we have no allies but the Americans whose duty & interest it is to make common cause with us in warring against the World whether they have good cause for doing so or not or whether they may ruin themselves or not by such a procedure, for have we not for some years talked of granting them benefits in their commerce with our West India possessions, tho the actual state of Europe may raise impediments to this agreement so that neither quantum or time of granting can now be stated still you must, Cit<sup>n</sup> Genet, urge the Americans to War & make it a condition sine qua non of their enjoying this essential & very beneficial commerce that they shall guarantee the possessions of the



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French Nation in the W. Indies for it nearly concerns the peace & prosperity of the French Nation, that a people, whose resources increase beyond all calculation and whom nature has placed so near our rich Colonies should become compelled by their own engagement to defend these Islands. They perhaps may not at present discover how certainly such a guarantee must produce immediate War & will probably be the cause in Future times of other expencive Wars which their present situation would never produce — But *the great Trade* will make them relish this, as they probably cannot see that our conduct with these llands has been such that in all human probability neither Ourselves, or they thro' our means will be permitted to trade there. In very truth I think these Instructions are as complete & complex an insult upon the honour & understanding of the U. States as could possibly be exhibited, and such as I sincerely believe no nation upon Earth but the present rulers of the French capable of exhibiting. Upon what ground is it presumptuously said that a due observation of the 17. 21. 22 articles of the Treaty of Commerce will cause the french Vessels to, "*have at their disposal all the Ports of the U. States & the provisions with which they abound.*" or why is that insulting threat introduced if these articles were not adhered to seeing that not the smallest attempt to violate them had ever been made. It is not usual to threaten nations with a scourge if they should behave ill in the opinion of others. Instructions having thus provided Citizen Genette with powerful inducements growing out of great profered rewards (as before stated) and authorized him to allarm our fears with threatened punishments they conceive they have already secured a declaration of Warr against the powers of Europe with whom we have no quarrel : They next proceed to provide their Citizen amply

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with Letters of mark & Commissions for Officers to be employed in the United States for equipping Vessels of War & raising Troops, taking care at the same time to charge M<sup>r</sup> Genette vigorously to prevent in the american Ports all equipments *unless upon account of the french Nation*. The Sun would sett before I should finish the observations that naturally flow from this absurd mass of insolence & selfishness. I had intended to have made some observations on M<sup>r</sup> Genette, but as he is so shortly to be recalled lett him take the fate that awaits him. I cannot however my friend help observing that you seem to think this Man only followed his instructions & that the latter appear designed only to draw us nearer to the authors of them. I think it may at least be said on the Agent that he was the harsh & premature executor of harsh & unwarrantable orders. That this drawing nearer may aptly be compared to a drowning Man out of friendship ketching at another no ways in danger & huging him closely to save them both from drowning. Upon the whole suffer me again to repeat that if we mean to be happy & flourishing we should carefully keep out of this Warr, offend none be civil to all.

I should be much obliged to you for informing me by return of Post if M<sup>r</sup> Richard Wells lately Casshiere of the Bank of North America is alive & now in that office, & if so to present my compliments to him & ask him if he received a Letter from me dated Dec<sup>r</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> 1793 to which I have never received an answer but shall thank him for one immediately ; also to my friend Tench Cox Esq<sup>r</sup> Commissioner of the revenue & know if he has received my Letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1793 to which no answer has been received & that I shall much thank him for one as soon as convenient. Please to inform me upon what terms you can purchase for me twenty pounds of the best Hyson Tea

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that if I like them I may send you a Bank Check, trusting to your goodness to buy it for me & send it as may hereafter be directed. I am to pray your indulgence for employing an Amanuensis the state of my health not permitting me to write myself. \*The Newspaper must remain until we know What your high Mightinesses intend to do in this business — Whether as our good President recommends, facilitate the dispersion of N. papers. or entirely Stop their progress thro the Union — As the Report of the Committee, if agreed to will certainly I think, effect — The papers of any consequence are daily papers, the same rate of Postage continued will render these very oppressive. And what must enevitably give general disturbance the Congress becoming Collectors for the Printers & demanding of the Subscribers six Months pay & Postage whether the Papers shall<sup>1</sup> ever be sent or not. I am Dear Sir yours with affection & sincerity.

TO THOMAS LEE SHIPPEN<sup>2</sup>

CHANTILLY feby 12<sup>th</sup> 1794

DEAR NEPHEW,

Such is the weak state of my health, & so greatly does writing disturb me, that I am compelled to employ an Amanuensis for the purpose of acknowledging the receipt of your Letter of January the 18<sup>th</sup> last. I will again begin with what relates to yourself and assure you that I lament exceedingly the unfortunate cause of your confinement. As you state the Abscess to be unconnected with the rectum, it seems to me that your Father is perfectly right in not risking the

<sup>1</sup> The portion of the letter between the asterisk and the numeral is in Richard Henry Lee's handwriting.

<sup>2</sup> L. S. Shippen Collection.

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division of that intestine. As you say that your Surgeons have opened to the bottom the Sinuses that were formed in different parts of the Ulcer, I make no doubt that if they found these cavities fistulous that care has been taken effectually to remove any callosity with which these cavities may have been lined; without which it seems impossible that any reunion of parts can ever take place. Should there be no fistula formed within I see no impropriety in the operation proposed by your father. This however looks much like the Rhetorician descanting on the art of War before Hannibal. I consider your father as the first Surgeon in America & therefore should not have gone so far on this subject had I not relied on his goodness for pardon. As a Physician he knows well that whilst the Surgeon is at work the Doctor must be idle. The Blood, I take it, must be essentially attended to; & he will judge whether Murcury in its best & most effectual forms of exhibition, together with such other medicines as act in the Same line; with a regulated diet, may not be indispensably necessary.

With respect to Politicks it seems to me that your zeal for liberty prevents you from so quickly discerning the true state of things. I too love Liberty, but it is a regulated Liberty, so that the ends & principles of society may not be disturbed by the fury of a Mob or by the art, cunning, and industry of wicked, vicious & avaricious Men. Do you really think that the present rulers in france, are contending for liberty? or will you conclude with me, upon reflection, that they care not a groat for Liberty any further than as a great noise about it may conduce to their acquisition of wealth & power. It is impossible that so sacred a thing as liberty can ever be necessarily supported by assassination, murder, deceit, plunder and every species of wickedness that the mind of Man has hitherto been



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supposed capable of possessing. As for M<sup>r</sup> Genet he appears to me to be the wicked Servant of wicked Masters, that he has exceeded the bounds of his most insolent instructions will I fancy fully appear from his commissions granted for levying Troops within the United States without the consent of Government & granting Commissions to Privateers before he was the acknowledged Minister from that Country to this. I heartily wish the French as much Liberty as they can bare but I do not beleive that the present rulers design it for them therefore I hope that in Gods good time they will all be hanged.

Disputes with your father about anything I never designed, I love him abundantly too much for that, & now I propose that he shall pay to you the few demands that you have against my Brother Arthurs Estate & that each of us shall give acquittances to the other for any demands whatsoever that either have against the other on my Brother Arthurs acc<sup>t</sup>. As soon as your health permits I beg the favour of your attention to the following subjects. As a Lawyer I will give you a fee of six Guineas for conducting & finishing the following business for me with M<sup>r</sup> Jared Ingersol. A certain M<sup>r</sup> Josephson (I think) became indebted to my Brother Arthur £500 for the payment of which a certain I. Young of Philadelphia mortgaged to my Brother his house & Lot in your City, which house & Lot was indisputably of more value than the £500 for which it was mortgaged; this Bond & mortgage was by my Brother put into the hands of M<sup>r</sup> Ingersol to get foreclosed, & which was *foreclosed* (I think) in the year 1790 and an execution was taken upon that Judgment which according to the constant proceedings in such cases should have caused a sale to have been made of Youngs house and Lot; M<sup>r</sup> Lees debt, Principal Interest & costs of suit, fully paid; &



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the balance<sup>1</sup> remaining if any, paid to M<sup>r</sup> Young; but nothing like this has been done. Instead of paying in the first place M<sup>r</sup> Lees principal, interest, & Costs he has paid on all these three accounts only £480:17:0. leaving a ballance as stated by M<sup>r</sup> A. Lee of £127:19:0 which acc<sup>t</sup> I sent to M<sup>r</sup> Ingersol without having entered into the calculations upon which it was founded. But it appears now, that M<sup>r</sup> Lee by his account, in calculating 6 Years Interest at 6 PCent has charged only £150 instead of £180 which the Interest then really amounted to, thereby increasing the ballance due at that time £30 so that with interest since that time the ballance due will really be now more than £160 pounds Pennsylvania money. For your better information I now send you a Copy of the acc<sup>t</sup> stated by M<sup>r</sup> Lee & sent to M<sup>r</sup> Ingersol, as also an account stated upon the principles on which it ought to stand. Since M<sup>r</sup> Lees death I have written two or three Letters to M<sup>r</sup> Ingersol & have received answers by no means satisfactory to me, In one of which however he says, that a ballance is due from Young which he thinks Young is able to pay. I cannot imagine what business Young has now with the matter, seeing that either M<sup>r</sup> Lees money should long since have been fully paid him or the Sheriff upon the execution have sold Youngs house & Lot, so that the Sherif not Young seems to be the Man with whom we have now to do. M<sup>r</sup> Ingersol in his last Letter to me, near a twelve month ago, desired from me an authority to proceed, he did the same to my Son when in Philad<sup>a</sup> & received authority from him altho' he had previously received it from me & in both cases promissing to write to me on the subject which, however he has not done, & so the matter now rests. Again my dear Nephew I repeat that if you will get

<sup>1</sup> The words "if any" are here inserted and erased.

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this matter fully & finally settled for me & my money lodged as a deposit for my use in the Bank of North America you have my free consent to deduct Six Guineas as a fee for your trouble. I must not omit to say from the papers in my possession that this M<sup>r</sup> Young appears to be a shifty, intriguing Man by whose manœuvres it may possibly happen that the house & Lot has never been sold ; but this is the look out of the Sherif who had the execution. There is no doubt but you may find upon the record of the proper Court Youngs Bond & Morgage, with the process previous to the foreclosure, the subsequent judgment & execution, with the Sheriffs return upon the latter. You will I doubt not as you promise attend to the Pas-yunk Land. Please civilly to press M<sup>r</sup> Cox & M<sup>r</sup> Rich<sup>d</sup> Wells for answers to my Letters written to each of them in Dec<sup>r</sup> last. I am very happy to hear that M<sup>rs</sup> Shippen \* is so auspiciously [sic] advanced I hope every happiness will attend the completion of her work. My love to all my Relations & respects to my friends whom you know I esteem as such

<sup>1</sup> I am very sincerely my dear  
Nephew your affectionate Uncle.

We expect with pleasure your visit here as you pass thro Virginia

P.S. — I request you will inform me whether you have been charged Postage for the last Letter I wrote you as well as on this as I have paid it on both. —

<sup>1</sup> The portion of the letter between the asterisk and the index number is in the handwriting of Richard Henry Lee.

# THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

TO [THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES]<sup>1</sup>

[GEORGE WASHINGTON]

CHANTILLY March the 8<sup>th</sup> 1794

DEAR SIR,

Not having enjoyed one days health since I had the honor of seeing you at Shuters hill, and closely confined at home,<sup>2</sup> I knew not until yesterday that M<sup>r</sup> H. Muse the Collector of Rappahannock had put his place in jeopardy by a conduct certainly very full of danger to the public affairs. A young Man of the same name and family has requested me to lay before you the reputation for fitness rightly to discharge the duties of this Office that he has acquired by doing the business of it for a considerable time past. That if you have not one more worthy in view he may have a chance to find favor with you. Doct<sup>r</sup> Brokenbrough who lives in the Town where M<sup>r</sup> Lawrence Muse has kept the Office; and whose judgement and opinion, I think, deserve attention, writes thus to me, "If I had not been well satisfied of his merit, I should not have taken this liberty; but I know him to be a young Man of strict integrity, and that his abilities in this Line are at least equal to any persons on Rappahannock"—My brother Frank of Menoken, who is not much disposed to give characters writes me "This young Man is generally very well spoken of, particularly for his dilligence and punctuality" It is true that I have not had much business with him, but at such times he has appeared expert and clever. Were I called upon to give my opinion concerning the late Malversation in that Office I think I could venture to

<sup>1</sup>A. L. S. Library of Congress, Washington Correspondence, LXXX. 113.

<sup>2</sup>Lee died June 19, 1794, at his home, Chantilly.

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say that I judged this person to have had no concern in the affair. I have spoken with him concerning his ability to give adequate security. Upon this point he appears to have no difficulty.

I am very happy to hear of Genets recall. And hope it may prove a lesson to others, however justified by instructions, or seeming to be so, that they may not with impunity trample upon all the forms of decency and respect, that have hitherto been practised in the World.

Is it possible that there can be any rational proof of the Court of London intriguing with Algiers and Portugal to hound out the former against our Trade. In any way that I can view the subject I cannot see the great interest that stimulate<sup>1</sup> a conduct so unjustifiable, so contrary to Neutrality, and at a peculiar [sic] crisis too, when our friendship not our enmity is to be desired. It is chiefly flour and grain that are sent to the South of Europe, in which articles, I believe, we have not the smallest competition with G. Britain. At the same time that the profits of this Trade enable our Merchants to pay for the immensity of British Manufactures that Mess<sup>rs</sup> Jefferson & Madison say we import from thence. I confess that I do not by any means approve the Trade Resolves introduced to Congress by the latter. They appear to me to be partial, very illtimed, and totally unnecessary. Because, the fact, (admitting it to be one, on which this whole Theory is built, and when by the bye Theories & the practise of Commerce have seldom agreed well) of our Commerce being so very highly beneficial to G. Britain as is stated, this fact, from the nature of things, must be continually increasing; so as to put the Gainers greatly too much in our power to permit them the idea of refusing our reasonable desires.

<sup>1</sup> The word "such" is here erased.

## THE LETTERS OF RICHARD HENRY LEE

And this without proceeding, at a time and in a manner, evidently to shew a prejudiced, hostile temper of mind. But what astonishes me is, to see so many of our Virginia Representatives voting for this most pernicious policy ! For certainly Virginia will feel the ruinous consequences of this Crambo Trade fatally and quickly. I hope your goodness will excuse my writing so much on this subject—The plan has often engaged the public attention, and been generally reprobated.

The Newspapers tell us that the present Minister of France condemns in toto the conduct of his predecessor, and in the same unlimited manner approves the proceeding of our government especially in what relates to our avoiding War. That he is right in both these points is incontestable. But attending to all we have seen, what consistent judgement can be formed to reconcile such contrarieties. I here lay aside the Crafty, deep and intricate politics that have distinguished the genius of France thro all the Annals of history ; by which she has duped so many Nations for her own advantage, and to their great injury. I have never heard it denied or doubted but that the instructions published by Genet were the genuine orders of his Masters, and altho in his conduct you discover the furious Zeal of a mad Precursor, yet it is impossible not to see thro the whole of the instructions the most decided determination to put us into the War by every possible means. The words of the instructions are, “we ought to excite by all possible means the Zeal of the Americans” &c &c Fortunately, very fortunately for these States, the Wisdom and Patriotism, firmness & vigilance of our Government hath frustrated the destructive design. But it is possible that this Minister can speak the sentiments of his Masters when he approves the condemnation of what they so warmly &



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evidently desired. It is here again lucky for us that we are fairly put upon our guard against all the Arts and Detours of the subtlest policy.

The success & happiness of the United States is our care, and if the nations of Europe approve War, we surely may be permitted to cultivate the arts of peace. And it is really a happiness to reflect that if War should befall us, our Government will not promote it; but give cause to all who venerate humanity to revere the Rulers here.

I beg leave to present my best respects, and those of this family to your Lady. I have the honor to be dear Sir with the most respectful sentiments of affection esteem your friend & Servant.



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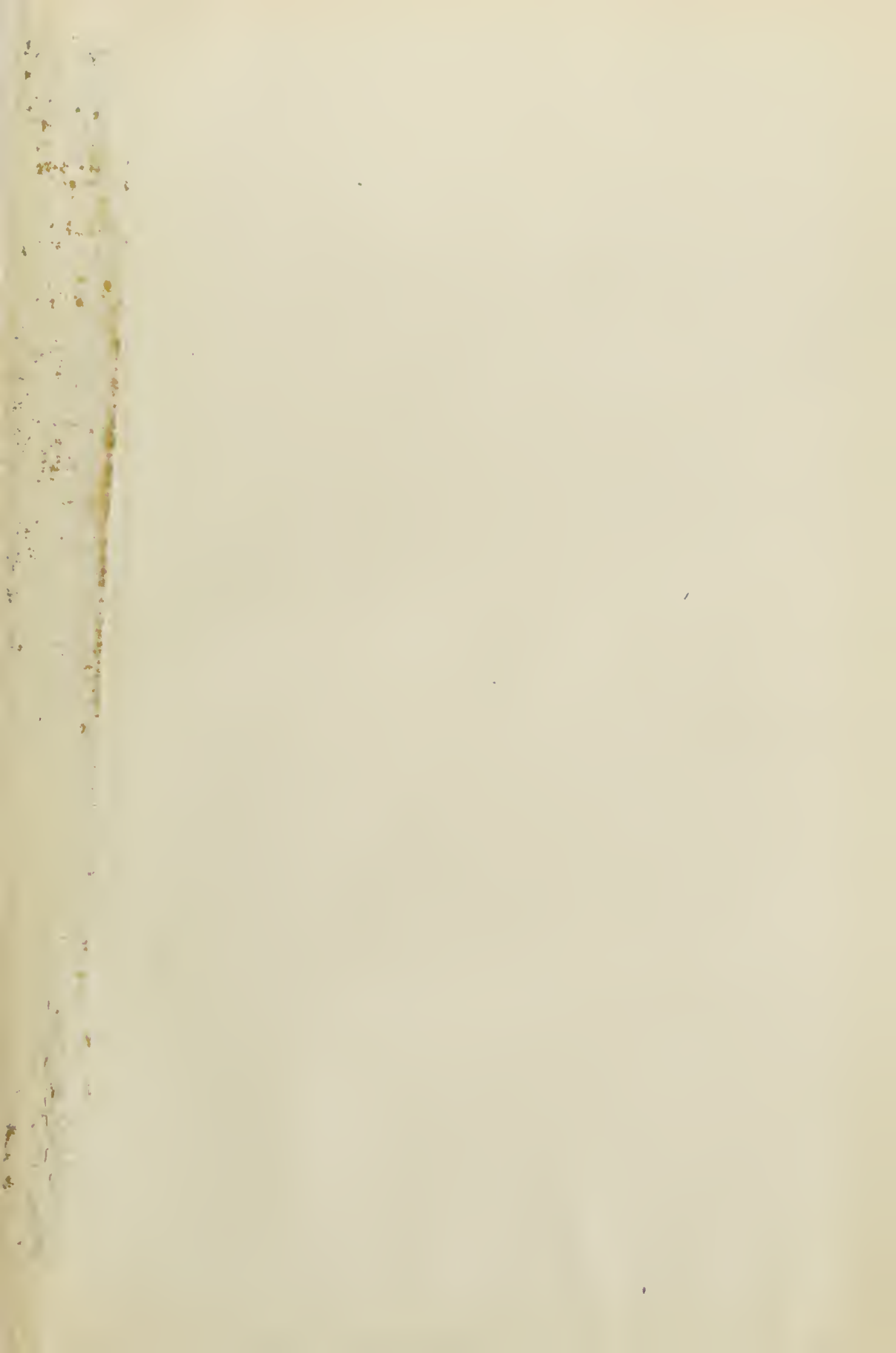
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